

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting a dissertation written by Jennifer R. Spates entitled “The Validation and Utilization of the C.A.R.E. Self-Assessment Tool and a Comparison of Perceived Levels of Cultural Responsiveness in Benwood I and Benwood II Schools.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Learning and Leadership.

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We have read this dissertation  
and recommend its acceptance.

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THE VALIDATION AND UTILIZATION OF THE C.A.R.E. SELF-ASSESSMENT  
TOOL AND A COMPARISON OF PERCEIVED LEVELS OF CULTURAL  
RESPONSIVENESS IN BENWOOD I AND BENWOOD II SCHOOLS

A Dissertation  
Presented for the  
Doctor of Education Degree  
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Jennifer R. Spates

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family for supporting me through this process and throughout all of my educational experiences. I feel a great sense of pride knowing that I did this for all of us. This is not just my accomplishment, but yours as well.

First and foremost, I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Lois Radford. I thank her for encouraging me and for being a true inspiration of persistence and perseverance in the face of life's obstacles. Her help with my children was unwavering. I also want to thank my sister, Jessica Griffin, and my aunt, Maggie Guy, because they- like my mother- were "on-call" babysitters for the last several years as I toiled through this endeavor. And lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to my girls, Chelsea and Ava Rose. Through this experience, I sought to be a positive role model for you and show you that education is the pathway to achieving all of your dreams.

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## Abstract

This study was conducted to determine teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive policies and practices in sixteen elementary schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Participants completed a survey called the C.A.R.E. (Culturally Aware and Responsive Education) tool, which was developed by the researcher. The survey was administered in two sets of schools with contrasting populations and a comparative analysis between the two sets of schools was conducted. The purpose of this study was to measure teachers' perceptions regarding the level of cultural responsiveness of their school's policies and practices. An additional purpose was to validate the C.A.R.E.

The sample of subjects consisted of educators from two sets of schools (referred to as Benwood Phase I schools and Benwood Phase II schools). These two groups were in differing stages of development of the same reform effort. The Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the C.A.R.E. The C.A.R.E. was determined to have an overall reliability of .928. Construct validity was established throughout the initial phases of the study by utilizing subject matter experts, including members of the dissertation committee.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), t-tests, and chi-square. The results of this study indicate that teachers in Benwood Phase I schools perceive the policies and practices at their schools to be more culturally responsive in 28 of 33 indicators identified in the C.A.R.E. instrument. Likewise, the results also indicate that teachers in Benwood II schools scored themselves higher in 5 of 33 areas listed in the C.A.R.E. The results show that in addition to the fact that there is a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of levels of culturally

responsive policies and practices in their schools, there is also a significant difference in the amount of professional development related to culturally responsive teaching among the two sets of schools. Educators in Benwood Phase I schools have had more professional development geared toward culturally responsive teaching. Lastly, this research determined that there was no significant difference in the socioeconomic backgrounds of educators in Benwood Phase I and Benwood Phase II schools, but that there is a difference between the socioeconomic backgrounds of teachers as compared to their students in both sets of schools.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction and Overview

Diversity in the United States is becoming progressively more reflected in the country's schools (Banks & Banks, 2001). At the same time, poverty is becoming an increasingly important issue that affects the quality of education. According to Banks and Banks (2001), in 1999 approximately 36.6 million people in the United States were living in poverty, including one in five students. The inequity between the rich and the poor is also increasing. The top one percent of households owned forty percent of the national wealth in 1997 (Banks & Banks, 2001). Although the nation's students are becoming increasingly more diverse, the majority of the nation's teachers are White, middle-class, and female (Banks & Banks, 2001). Specifically, about eighty seven percent are White, and seventy two percent are female (Banks & Banks, 2001).

These demographic, social, and economic trends have important implications for education (Banks & Banks, 2001). It is crucial that teachers learn how to recognize, honor, and incorporate the personal abilities of students into their teaching strategies (Gay, 2000). A student's cultural background can have an impact on achievement. Achievement will improve when teachers recognize that culture has a significant role in the learning process (Gay, 2000). Although some researchers have begun analyzing the ways in which culture affects learning, there has been little progress towards solving the problem that is the motivation for this dissertation: to see if increased self-assessment among school teachers and leaders could be used to improve teacher's perceptions of minority students in urban schools.

This dissertation described the development and distribution of an instrument designed to assess the cultural responsiveness of schools with culturally diverse groups and culturally diverse student and teacher populations. The research related to the development of the instrument was conducted in two sets of schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee (Benwood Phase I schools and Benwood Phase II schools).

In 1990, eight of the lowest performing schools in Tennessee were in Chattanooga, Tennessee. These schools became known as the Benwood schools because they were awarded a five million dollar grant from the Benwood Foundation and the Public Education Foundation of Chattanooga based on the fact that they had the lowest standardized test scores in the district. Each of these schools had a high population of students from backgrounds of poverty. The intent of the extra support from the Benwood Foundation for these schools was to take them from “non-proficient” to “proficient”. After the established success of the original Benwood schools, eight more schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee were awarded an additional \$7 million grant in July of 2007. These schools became known as the Benwood Phase II schools, and the first eight schools were then referred to as Benwood Phase I schools. Phase II schools were specifically chosen due to the fact that they had a high percentage of students performing at the “proficient” level. The purpose of the extra support from Benwood for these schools was to take them from “proficient” to “advanced”.

A comparative analysis was conducted to explore the perceptions of teachers in each set of schools. In the book *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Strauss and Corbin (1998) say that comparative analysis is an effective way to explain differences and similarities of groups. The

instrument, entitled the C.A.R.E. (Culturally Aware and Responsive Education) was initially developed by using identified best practices in the current literature. For example, Gay (2000) identified culturally responsive practices in her six characteristics of culturally responsive teaching (Validating, Comprehensive, Multidimensional, Empowering, Transformative, and Emancipatory) and all were integrated into the tool (Gay, 2000). In addition, The Education Alliance at Brown University identified culturally responsive practices in nine principles of culturally responsive teaching (Teacher as Facilitator, Communication of High Expectations, Active Teaching Methods, Positive Perspectives on Parents and Families of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students, Cultural Sensitivity, Reshaping of Curriculum, Culturally Mediated Instruction, Student-Controlled Classroom Discourse, Small Group Instruction and Academically-Related Discourse). These were all used to develop the domains and indicators of the instrument (retrieved from [www.knowledgeloom.com](http://www.knowledgeloom.com) on November 21, 2008). Best practices were grouped into seven domains; each domain consisted of indicators that one would expect to observe in a culturally responsive educational setting. The following domains were developed:

- Culturally Responsive Institutional Policies
- Culturally Responsive Institutional Practices
- Culturally Responsive Learning Environments
- Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction
- Culturally Responsive Social Development
- Culturally Responsive Assessment
- Culturally Responsive Community Engagement



This dissertation explored the ways in which culturally diverse public schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee, were impacted by the use of an assessment tool created to determine a school's level of cultural responsiveness. The researcher sought to identify and explore any significant differences in perceptions among teachers in the two sets of schools. The researcher used a draft of the C.A.R.E. to determine what the components of culturally responsive practice should include. Using feedback from teachers, school administrators, and policy makers, the researcher made changes and additions to the tool as determined necessary throughout the initial phases of the study. The instrument was determined to have a reliability of .928 based on the Cronbach alpha.

#### Statement of the Problem

With the increasingly diverse nature of public schools, it is imperative that schools adopt culturally responsive policies and practices. Formative assessment specifically aimed at self-assessment of cultural awareness and sensitivity is a critical enhancement of a culturally responsive educational program. Many urban schools in Chattanooga have a majority population of African American and Hispanic students from backgrounds of poverty. These same schools employ a majority of White teachers and policy makers from middle-class backgrounds. Classrooms in Chattanooga today are not the same as they were a decade or even a few years ago. Major demographic shifts in Chattanooga have led to increasing numbers of culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse students in our schools. In addition, the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and the resulting mandates requiring schools to report disaggregated data have forced a spotlight on the achievement gaps that have been prevalent for years between minority students and their mainstream peers. The purpose of

this study was three-fold: 1) to determine if a cultural responsiveness assessment tool would aid school faculty members and policy makers in becoming more culturally aware and responsive, 2) to determine what essential components of culturally responsive teaching should be included in the C.A.R.E., and 3) to compare perceptions regarding culturally responsive policies and practices of educators in contrasting populations.

Recent reports and research seem to indicate that some progress is being made in closing the gaps, but there are still significant inequities that continue to exist for a wide range of educational indicators, including grades, scores on standardized tests, dropout rates, and participation in higher education (Viadero & Johnston, 2000). Some research indicates that these disparities in achievement stem in part from a lack of fit between traditional school practices—which are derived almost exclusively from European American culture—and the home cultures of diverse students and their families (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995). According to Hollins, children with a European-American heritage have an automatic educational advantage, while children from other backgrounds are required "to learn through cultural practices and perceptions other than their own" (Hollins, 1996, p. X). A cultural mismatch is often the result of these divergent perspectives regarding fundamental concepts like human nature, time, the natural environment, and social relationships (Sowers, 2004).

#### Rationale

The United States is experiencing an increase in the disproportionately high percentage of students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Kozol, 2000). Researcher Jonathon Kozol explored the lack of cultural congruence in many schools, and he maintains that many public, urban schools offer curricula unrelated to the lives of the

children who attend them, and these schools disregard the unique knowledge that students bring with them (Kozol, 2000). He argues that there is a growing need for schools to develop specific benchmarks in improvement plans which address the development of practices targeted towards increasing achievement among minorities (Kozol, 2000). All teachers need to recognize and respond appropriately to the needs, aims, and aspirations of the diverse cultural and ethnic groups to whom they provide services (Ladson- Billings, 1995).

Ladson-Billings argues that culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1995). She says that schools can be analyzed to determine the ways in which they may become more accessible to culturally diverse learners (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The C.A.R.E. has the potential to be a critical step in this process.

#### Purpose

The primary purpose of this inquiry was to determine what educators and policy makers perceive to be the critical aspects of culturally responsive teaching and to use that information to make the C.A.R.E. more valid and reliable. An additional purpose was to validate the C.A.R.E. instrument. Moreover, analyzing two contrasting populations of teachers to determine perceptions of culturally responsive teaching was meant to provide critical information for Hamilton County, the Benwood Foundation and the Public Education Foundation.

## Significance

The findings of this study have the potential to inform educators and policy makers about the impact that self assessment of perceptions related to cultural responsiveness has on student achievement. The C.A.R.E. could be an effective self-assessment tool for bringing about more a self-awareness and culturally responsive practices, so it has the potential to contribute significantly to the body of knowledge currently being taught to pre-service teachers in teacher preparation programs. In addition, it may be used to provide school systems with needed information for planning and implementing professional development opportunities that will allow teachers to be more effective with diverse groups of students.

## Research Questions

1. Do the perceptions regarding culturally responsive education differ between educators in Benwood Phase I and Benwood Phase II schools?
2. Is there a higher proportion of teachers serving students from socioeconomic backgrounds similar to their own in Benwood Phase I schools or Benwood Phase II schools?
3. Between Benwood I schools and Benwood II schools, which group of educators has had more professional development regarding culturally responsive teaching?

## Hypotheses

1. Hypothesis for Question 1: There is a significant difference in the perceptions of levels of cultural responsiveness between educators in Benwood Phase I schools and teachers in Benwood Phase II schools.

2. Hypothesis for Question 2: There are significant differences in socioeconomic backgrounds of educators in Benwood Phase I schools and teachers in Benwood Phase II schools.
3. Hypothesis for Question 3: There is a significant difference in the amount of professional development the educators in Benwood Phase I schools and Benwood Phase II schools have had.

#### Independent Variables

The independent variables in this study were:

1. The status of the school (Benwood Phase I or Benwood Phase II).
2. The responses to the fifteen demographic questions of participants.

#### Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in this study were the seven domains, and the thirty-three indicators composing the survey:

1. Culturally Responsive Institutional Policies- 4 indicators
2. Culturally Responsive Institutional Practices- 5 indicators
3. Culturally Responsive Learning Environment- 4 indicators
4. Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction- 7 indicators
5. Culturally Responsive Social Development- 4 indicators
6. Culturally Responsive Assessment- 6 indicators
7. Culturally Responsive Community Engagement- 3 indicators

#### Limitations

The limitations of the study were as follows:

1. The study was limited by the level of honesty and the perceptions of the public school personnel who completed the survey.
2. The study was limited by the aspects of culturally responsive teaching addressed in the questions on the C.A.R.E. assessment.
3. There were specific difficulties involved in interpreting information during the interview process (what you think you hear may not be what someone else hears, and what you interpret may not be easily explainable).
5. “Transferability” is a constructionist equivalent of the conventional term external validity. External validity refers to the ability to generalize findings across different settings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that generalizability is an “appealing concept” because it “allows an appearance of prediction and control over situations” (p. 110-111). The transferability of a working hypothesis to other situations depends on the degree of similarity between the original situation and the situation to which it is transferred. This researcher cannot specify the transferability of the findings of this research. The researcher can only provide sufficient information that can then be used by the reader to determine whether the findings are applicable to the new situation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As a result, the reader, not the researcher, would decide the transferability of the findings.

#### Delimitations

The delimitations of the study were as follows:

1. The study was purposely delimited to the perceptions of educators in two contrasting populations (Benwood I and Benwood II schools) in one school system (Hamilton) in one state (Tennessee).

2. The study was delimited by conducting observations in each school and analyzing cultural artifacts for evidence of culturally responsive policies and practices.

### Methodological Assumptions

For use in this study, assumptions were as follows:

1. Educators in Benwood Phase I schools and in Benwood Phase II schools were expected by Hamilton County Department of Education and by Benwood to complete the C.A.R.E. for the 2008-09 school year.
2. The selected sample for this research, licensed educators in Benwood Phase I schools and licensed educators in Benwood Phase II schools, was representative of the sample chosen.
3. Participants provided honest answers and were identified by confidential identification coding at the school level as being a teacher in a Benwood school.
4. The survey closely measured factors for analysis.
5. The domains included in the C.A.R.E provided a comprehensive set of indicators to assess levels of cultural responsiveness.
6. Comments and observations made by the interview participants were provided with accuracy.

### Conceptual Framework

After much careful reading of the literature, the most significant concepts involved in culturally responsive teaching were identified. The five established frameworks which the researcher commonly referred to were as follows: Jordan's Cultural Compatibility Framework (1985), Au & Kawakami's Cultural Congruence Framework (1994), Ladson-Billings' Culturally Relevant Teaching Framework (1990),

and Erikson's Culturally Responsive Teaching Framework (1987) and Gay's Culturally Responsive Learning Framework (2000). For the purposes of this project, the specific domains explored relating to a culturally responsive organization included policies, practices, learning environments, literacy development, social development, assessment, and community engagement. Addressed in these domains were major concepts like culturally responsive teaching techniques, cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, cultural competence, cultural congruence, multicultural education, cultural relevance, and social justice. Each of these concepts was categorized as a policy or a practice. Some of the revealed sub-concepts related to these major concepts included sociolinguistics, autoethnographic reflexivity, code-switching, bidialectism, and cultural synchronization.

Although various means of investigating perceptions were explored, the researcher ascertained that perceptions by survey questionnaire was the most appropriate for this research because such a process is useful where a large number of subjects are sought. Within the context of culturally responsive policies and practices, a strong foundation of "core knowledge" or "essential ideas" was developed by primarily referring to Ladson-Billings' (1995) Culturally Relevant Learning Approach and Gay's (2000) Culturally Responsive Learning Theory. With the knowledge base established, the researcher created a visual representation of concepts related to culturally responsive policies and practices and their relationships. The visual representation of the concepts, principles, and existing frameworks utilized is shown in Table 1.1 on the following page.



Table 1.1  
*Conceptual Framework*

Established Frameworks	Researcher
Cultural Compatibility	Jordan (1985)
Cultural Congruence	Au & Kawakami (1994)
Culturally Relevant Teaching	Ladson-Billings (1990)
Culturally Responsive Teaching	Erikson (1987)
Culturally Responsive Learning	Gay (2000)
Culturally Responsive Policies	Culturally Responsive Practices
<p><i>The organization has policies in place that address the following:</i></p> <p><u>Multicultural Education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Regularly scheduled celebrations that focus on real-life experiences and people</li> <li>➤ Multicultural goals (SIP, mission statement, handbook)</li> <li>➤ Teacher Professional Development</li> </ul> <p><u>Diversity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Promotion and appreciation</li> <li>➤ Teacher Professional Development</li> </ul> <p><u>Social Justice</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Cultural synchronization</li> <li>➤ Honesty</li> <li>➤ Equity</li> <li>➤ Empowerment</li> <li>➤ Teacher Professional Development</li> </ul> <p><u>Community Engagement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Cultural awareness &amp; sensitivity</li> <li>➤ Parent Training Component</li> <li>➤ Collaboration</li> <li>➤ Additional Resources</li> <li>➤ Teacher Professional Development</li> </ul>	<p><i>The organization has institutionalized practices in place that address the following:</i></p> <p><u>Literacy Development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Sociolinguistics</li> <li>➤ Code-switching</li> <li>➤ Contrastive Analysis</li> <li>➤ Teacher Professional Development</li> </ul> <p><u>Learning Environments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Representation of all cultures in materials and displays</li> <li>➤ Diversified curriculum</li> <li>➤ Teacher Professional Development</li> </ul> <p><u>Social Development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Autoethnographic reflexivity</li> <li>➤ Reflective, critical conversations</li> <li>➤ Group problem-solving, team-bldg.</li> <li>➤ Collective sense of community</li> <li>➤ Teacher Professional Development</li> </ul> <p><u>Assessment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Bias review panels</li> <li>➤ Judgmental reviews</li> <li>➤ Recognition of bias and offensiveness</li> <li>➤ Teacher Professional Development</li> </ul>

### Definition of Terms

African American Vernacular English (AAVE)- is a synonym for the plethora of terms used to refer to the dialect of English spoken by many African Americans in the United States. Known colloquially as Ebonics, also called Black English, Black Vernacular or Black English Vernacular, is a dialect and ethnolect of American English. Similar in certain pronounciational respects to common southern U.S. English, the dialect is spoken by many African Americans in the United States. AAVE shares many characteristics with various Pidgin and Creole English dialects spoken by blacks worldwide.

African Americans- are United States citizens who have an African biological and cultural heritage and identity. This term is used to describe both a racial and ethnic group. A synonym for Black and Afro-American. Used to refer to natural born American citizens of African descent whose ancestors may have been slaves in the United States of America.

Autoethnographic Reflexivity- refers to teacher-student and student-teacher method of learning based on interaction and dialogue that serve to transform both sides of the relationship.

Benwood I Schools- are the eight high-priority schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee, which were awarded a five million dollar grant from the Benwood Foundation and the Public Education Foundation of Chattanooga based on the fact that they had the lowest standardized test scores in the district. In 1990, eight of the lowest performing schools in Tennessee were in Hamilton County. The intent of the extra support from Benwood for these schools was to take them from “non-proficient” to “proficient”.

Benwood II Schools- are the eight schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee, which were awarded an additional \$7 million grant in July of 2007. These schools were specifically chosen due to the fact that they had a high percentage of students performing at the “proficient” level. The purpose of the extra support from Benwood for these schools was to take them from “proficient” to “advanced”. Benwood funds are continuing to support the work of the eight original Benwood Schools while also providing direct support for eight additional schools.

Bias Review Panel- refers to a panel of experts (teachers and educational leaders) who carefully examine assessments to identify bias test items.

Bidialectism- refers to fluency in two dialects. Individuals possessing bidialectism have the ability to code switch and even code mix.

Code Switching- is an alternation between two or more languages, dialects, or language registers in the course of discourse between people who have more than one language in common. Sometimes the switch lasts only for a few sentences, or even for a single phrase.

Contrastive Analysis- refers to the systematic study of a pair of languages with a view to identifying their structural differences and similarities

Culture- refers to the shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, institutions, and experience of a group of people. The group may be identified by race, age, ethnicity, language, national origin, religion, or other social categories or groupings.

Cultural Compatibility- refers to the similarities between the culture of the student and the teacher.

Cultural Congruence- refers to curriculum delivery that is designed to match the cultural values of students.

Culturally Responsive- refers to instruction that bridges the gap between the school and the world of the student, is consistent with the values of the students' own culture aimed at assuring academic learning, and encourages teachers to adapt their instruction to meet the learning needs of all students.

Cultural Synchronization- refers to the quality of fit between the teacher and students' culture. For African American students, this concept is related to Afro centrality and Black life. This can cause a conflict between the child's learning style and that of a white school system that emphasizes Eurocentric values.

Diversity- is a term used to describe the relative uniqueness of each individual in the population. It may also refer to a variation in society of culture and other factors, such as age, race, gender, physical abilities, sexual orientation, or religion.

Empirical Analysis- is an analysis that is derived from or relies on established observations, experiments, and research.

Ethnographic- refers to a research approach that focuses on specific problems or situations within a larger social scene.

HCDE- is an abbreviation for Hamilton County Department of Education.

Judgmental Reviews- refers to a panel of individuals who carefully analyze assessments and seek to detect and eliminate biased items or tasks from those assessments.

Non-Standard English- refers to a variety of English that is held to be "incorrect" because it shows regional or other variations that are considered by some to be ungrammatical.

Offensiveness in Test Items- refers to test content that offends, or upsets, angers, distresses, or otherwise creates negative emotions for students of particular subgroups.

PEF- is an abbreviation for Public Education Foundation.

Responsiveness- refers to the ability to acknowledge the unique needs of diverse students, take action to address those needs, and adapt approaches as student needs and demographics change over time.

Sociolinguistics- is a branch of anthropological linguistics that studies how language and culture are related and how language is used in different social contexts.

Standard English (SE)- is a dialect of the English language, usually taken to mean that version of the English language most acceptable or most "correct," used by educated middle and upper classes and thus the dialect taught in public schools.

TEP- is an abbreviated way of referring to a teacher education program.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Williams (1997) asserts that test scores can be raised and students can be empowered in their learning when educators teach in a culturally responsive manner. According to Gay (2000), culturally responsive instruction utilizes the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning experiences more relevant and effective (Gay, 2000). Ladson-Billings describes culturally responsive teaching as a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Culturally responsive teachers deeply understand that culture is central to learning (Gay, 2000). They recognize the important role it plays not only in communicating and receiving information, but also in shaping the thinking processes of groups and individuals (Gay, 2000). Culturally responsive pedagogy acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates cultures and offers equitable access to education for students from all cultures (Williams, 1997).

There are multiple definitions of culture. Many of these include the knowledge, rules, traditions, attitudes, and values that guide behavior in a particular group of people (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). Although culture tends to be associated with ethnicity or race, some researchers have identified significant cultural differences between children in poverty and their middle class and wealthy peers- differences that have important implications for teaching and learning (Payne, 1998). Cultural

groups can be identified through region, gender, ethnic, religious, social class, or other characteristics. Each person in society can likely identify with and be influenced by multiple cultures. Individuals of African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, or European descent each have distinctive histories and traditions. In addition, experiences of males and females typically vary in most ethnic groups (Payne, 1998). Although there are many people in the United States who share some common experiences and values, their experiences related to school often differ greatly depending on the cultural context of the classroom (Payne, 1998).

Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as teaching that uses cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students. In addition, Gay (2000) describes culturally responsive teaching as having the following characteristics:

- It acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum.
- It builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities.
- It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles.
- It teaches students to know and praise their own and each others' cultural heritages.

- It incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools (p. 29)

### Multicultural Education

Before delving too deeply into the characteristics of culturally responsive teaching, it may be helpful to go back and review what many scholars believe to be the origin of culturally responsive teaching; multicultural education. Multicultural education means different things to different people. A variety of advocates and scholars have had a long-standing discussion about what the definition of multicultural education should include. However, this debate should not be viewed in a negative way, especially when we consider that multicultural education is all about plurality (Gay, 1994). Gay argues that it is important to allow different implementations when planning for multicultural education in school programs (Gay, 1994). According to her, varying program implementation models of multicultural education (which the author refers to as *conceptions*) contain value beliefs and reflect the varying levels of understanding among people involved in the school decision-making process (Gay, 1994). Specifically, she says that “Conceptions of multicultural education and the value beliefs within them delineate the scope, focus, and boundaries of the field of multicultural education. These are guidelines for action and need to be clearly understood early in the process of making educational decisions” (Gay, 1994, p. 4). In her report entitled *A Synthesis of Scholarship in Multicultural Education*, Gay explores these many and varying implementations of multicultural education.

While some definitions of multicultural education rely on the cultural characteristics of diverse groups, others commonly emphasize social problems (particularly those



associated with oppression), political power, and the reallocation of economic resources. Some focus primarily on people of color, while others include all major groups that are different in any way from mainstream Americans (Gay, 1994). “Other definitions limit multicultural education to characteristics of local schools, and still others provide directions for school reform in all settings regardless of their characteristics. The goals of these diverse types of multicultural education range from bringing more information about various groups to textbooks, to combating racism, to restructuring the entire school enterprise and reforming society to make schools more culturally fair, accepting, and balanced.” (Gay, 1994, p.5) The following are definitions that are commonly used to explain the basic focus and ideas behind multicultural education:

- An idea, an educational reform movement, and a process intended to change the structure of educational institutions so that all students have an equal chance to achieve academic success (Gay, 1994).
- A philosophy that stresses the importance, legitimacy, and vitality of ethnic and cultural diversity in shaping the lives of individuals, groups, and nations (Gay, 1994).
- A reform movement that changes all components of the educational enterprise, including its underlying values, procedural rules, curricula, instructional materials, organizational structure, and governance policies to reflect cultural pluralism (Gay, 1994).
- An ongoing process that requires long term investments of time and effort as well as carefully planned and monitored actions (Banks & Banks, 1993).

- Institutionalizing a philosophy of cultural pluralism within the educational system that is grounded in principles of equality, mutual respect, acceptance and understanding, and moral commitment to social justice (Baptiste, 1979).
- Structuring educational priorities, commitments, and processes to reflect the cultural pluralism of the United States and to ensure the survival of group heritages that make up society, following American democratic ideals (AACTE, 1973; Hunter, 1974)
- An education free of inherited biases, with freedom to explore other perspectives and cultures, inspired by the goal of making children sensitive to the plurality of the ways of life, different modes of analyzing experiences and ideas, and ways of looking at history found throughout the world (Parekh, 1986, p. 26-27).
- A humanistic concept based on the strength of diversity, human rights, social justice, and alternative lifestyles for all people, it is necessary for a quality education and includes all efforts to make the full range of cultures available to students; it views a culturally pluralistic society as a positive force and welcomes differences as vehicles for better understanding the global society (ASCD Multicultural Education Commission, in Grant, 1977, p. 3).
- An approach to teaching and learning based upon democratic values that foster cultural pluralism; in its most comprehensive form, it is a commitment to achieving educational equality, developing curricula that build understanding about ethnic groups, and combating oppressive practices (Bennett, 1990).
- A type of education that is concerned with various groups in American society that are victims of discrimination and assaults because of their unique cultural

characteristics (ethnic, racial, linguistic, gender, etc.); it includes studying such key concepts as prejudice, identity, conflicts, and alienation, and modifying school practices and policies to reflect an appreciation for ethnic diversity in the United States (Banks, 1977).

- Acquiring knowledge about various groups and organizations that oppose oppression and exploitation by studying the artifacts and ideas that emanate from their efforts (Sizemore, 1981).
- Policies and practices that show respect for cultural diversity through educational philosophy, staffing composition and hierarchy, instructional materials, curricula, and evaluation procedures (Frazier, 1977; Grant, 1977).
- Comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students that challenge all forms of discrimination, permeate instruction and interpersonal relations in the classroom, and advance the democratic principles of social justice (Nieto, 1992).

Ladson-Billings (1995) defines culturally responsive teaching as a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. She also identifies nine principles that are common in a culturally responsive setting.

- *Communication of High Expectations* - There are consistent messages, from both the teacher and the whole school that students will succeed, based upon genuine respect for students and belief in student capability.
- *Active Teaching Methods* - Instruction is designed to promote student engagement by requiring that students play an active role in crafting curriculum and developing learning activities.

- *Teacher as Facilitator* - Within an active teaching environment, the teacher's role is that of guide, mediator, and knowledgeable consultant, as well as instructor.
- *Positive Perspectives on Parents and Families of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*- There is an ongoing participation in dialogue with students, parents, and community members on issues important to them, along with the inclusion of these individuals and issues in classroom curriculum and activities.
- *Cultural Sensitivity* - To maximize learning opportunities, teachers gain knowledge of the cultures represented in their classrooms and translate this knowledge into instructional practice (retrieved from [www.knowledgeloom.com](http://www.knowledgeloom.com), on December 21, 2008).

Culturally responsive teaching involves utilizing these characteristics to differentiate teaching and modify the classroom environment as needed in order to make learning most meaningful for students. In a culturally responsive classroom, literature reflects the ethnic perspectives represented in the class. Math instruction incorporates everyday-life concepts, such as the economics, employment, and consumer habits of the ethnic groups represented. Finally, in order to teach to the different learning styles of students, learning opportunities reflect a variety of sensory opportunities-visual, auditory, tactile (Gay, 2000). Ladson-Billings (1995) explains that culturally responsive teachers develop intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by "using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 382). In a sense, culturally responsive teachers teach the whole child (Gay, 2000). Hollins (1996) adds that education designed specifically for students of color incorporates "culturally mediated cognition, culturally appropriate social situations for learning, and culturally valued knowledge in curriculum

content" (p. 13). Culturally responsive teachers realize not only the importance of academic achievement, but also the maintaining of cultural identity and heritage (Gay, 2000). Ladson-Billings (1995) studied real-life instruction in actual elementary classrooms, and she concluded that it was common for these values to be demonstrated. She recognized that when students were part of a collective effort designed to encourage academic and cultural excellence, expectations were clearly expressed, skills were effectively taught, and positive interpersonal relations were exhibited. Students viewed the teacher and one another like members of an extended family (assisting, supporting, and encouraging each other). Students were held accountable as part of a larger group, and it was the task of the entire learning community to make certain that each individual member of the group was successful. By promoting this academic community of learners, teachers responded to the students' need for a sense of belonging, honored their human dignity, and promoted their individual self-concepts (Gay, 2000). Culturally responsive teaching empowers students from diverse backgrounds of poverty. Shor (1992) characterizes empowering education this way:

“It is a critical-democratic pedagogy for self and social change. It is a student-centered program for multicultural democracy in school and society. It approaches individual growth as an active, cooperative, and social process, because the self and society create each other. The goals of this pedagogy are to relate personal growth to public life, to develop strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry, and critical curiosity about society, power, inequality, and change. The learning process is negotiated, requiring leadership by the teacher, and mutual teacher-student authority. In addition, the empowering class does not teach students to seek self-centered gain while ignoring public

welfare (p. 15-16).”

Culturally responsive teaching does not incorporate traditional educational practices with respect to students of color (Gay, 2000). Teachers respect the cultures and experiences of various groups and they consistently use them as resources for teaching and learning. This approach appreciates the existing strengths and accomplishments of all students and develops them for advanced instruction. For example, richness of the verbal creativity and story-telling that is unique among some users of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in informal social interactions is acknowledged as a gift and contribution to their heritage and used to teach exemplary writing skills.

Banks (1991) argues that if education is to empower marginalized groups, it must be transformative. Being transformative involves helping "students to develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become social critics who can make reflective decisions and implement their decisions in effective personal, social, political, and economic action" (Banks, p. 131). Ladson-Billings (1995) argues that the culturally relevant pedagogy she developed transforms curriculum by encompassing and going beyond considerations of sociolinguistics or social organizations to include three more essential elements:

- *Students Must Experience Academic Success*- “Despite the current social inequities and hostile classroom environments, students must develop their academic skills. The ways those skills are developed may vary, but all students need literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills in order to be active participants in a democracy” (Ladson-Billings, 1995 p. 160).

- *Students Must Develop/Maintain Their Cultural Competence*- “Culturally relevant teachers utilize students’ culture as a vehicle for learning” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p.161).
- *Students Must Develop a Critical Consciousness to Challenge the Status Quo*- Excellent teachers help students “develop broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the social norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p.162).

Geneva Gay (2000) says that culturally responsive teaching “teaches *to and through* the strengths of ethnically diverse students” (Gay, 2000, p. 29). Gay goes on to argue that “it is culturally validating and affirming” (Gay, 2000, p. 29). Gay describes culturally responsive climates as inclusive settings that foster respect, connection, and caring. She argues that interpersonal relationships are built and fostered, and there is a sense of community within the classroom that is developed and cultivated (Gay, 2000). In addition, Ladson-Billings describes a culturally responsive classroom as one where bridges are built between academic learning and students’ prior understanding, native language, and values. Culture, native language and dialect are valued and used as assets in learning rather than deficits (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

A research review entitled *Does Race Matter? A Comparison of Effective Black and White Teachers of African American Students* was conducted by Cooper in 2003. This paper reviewed research on what makes Black and White teachers effective in teaching Black children. There is a lack of empirical data on the effectiveness of White teachers with Black children, as compared with Black teachers (Cooper, 2003). However, one of the compelling aspects of this paper is the fact that the author included personal

narratives of White teachers' perspectives. Some of the major findings of this study are as follows:

- Culturally responsive teachers have high expectations for their students.
- Culturally responsive teachers have interpersonal relationships with their students and student families as well as with members of the community.
- Culturally responsive teachers restructure curriculum to appeal to the strengths and interests of Black children.
- Culturally responsive White teachers have a hyperconsciousness about race in the classroom. They regularly generate discussions regarding race relations.
- Culturally responsive teachers promote tolerance.
- Culturally responsive teachers appreciate learning styles typical of Black children.

This research also revealed several differences in the teaching styles of Black and White teachers. One of the most controversial distinctions observed was that White teachers generally did not emphasize authority in conjunction with good teaching. However, Black teachers consistently and passionately expressed beliefs that Black children learn best in a more authority-based, firm style. Similarly, this belief that authority demonstrates caring is reflected in the African American community (Cooper, 2002).

Ginsberg and Wlodkowski completed a meta-analysis of culturally responsive pedagogy for their book *Creating Highly Motivating Classrooms for all Students: A School-Wide Approach to Powerful Teaching with Diverse Learners*. In their synthesis of the literature, they were able to develop a description of a research-based approach to



culturally responsive pedagogy. The authors began by reviewing the research on various learning theories, cultural studies, and teaching practices. They then used this information to describe the key components of a culturally responsive school. Finally, they presented practical strategies for applying the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching (Doherty, Hillberg, Pinal, and Tharp, 2003). This framework is built on principles that are meaningful across cultures. The purpose of the framework was to unify teaching practices to encourage learners to be intrinsically motivated so that teacher would be able to design meaningful learning opportunities for students (Doherty, Hillberg, Pinal, and Tharp, 2003). The four conditions of the Motivational Framework are:

- Establishing inclusion where a learning climate is developed in which teachers and students feel respected and connected to one another.
- Developing a positive attitude by employing principles and practices that contribute to a favorable disposition toward learning through personal and cultural relevance and choice.
- Enhancing meaning to bring about challenging and engaging learning that has social merit and matters to students.
- Having students recognize that they are learning something that they value.

In a multivariate correlational study conducted by Doherty, Hilberg, Pinal, and Tharp in 2003, two studies were conducted to determine standards for improving achievement in culturally diverse classrooms. The Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence developed five standards for effective pedagogy. In the two

studies, the authors utilized these five standards to determine their effectiveness in raising academic achievement among minority students. The five standards are as follows:

- Standard 1- *Teachers and Students Working Together*. Use instructional group activities in which students and teacher work together to create a product or idea.
- Standard 2- *Developing Language and Literacy Skills across the Curriculum*. Apply literacy strategies and develop language competence in all subject areas.
- Standard 3- *Connecting Lessons to Students' Lives*. Contextualize teaching and curriculum in students' existing experiences in home, community, and school.
- Standard 4- *Engaging Students with Challenging Lessons*. Maintain challenging standards for student performance; design activities to advance understanding to more complex levels.
- Standard 5- *Emphasizing Dialogue over Lectures*. Instruct through teacher-student dialogue, especially academic, goal-directed, small group conversations, rather than lecture. (Doherty, Hilberg, Pinal, and Tharp, 2003).

These standards were the result of three decades of research across cultural and socioeconomic contexts. They resulted in the development of a program specifically designed to be culturally responsive to native Hawaiian students (Doherty, Hilberg, Pinal, and Tharp, 2003). The first study concluded that there was a consistent relationship between the use of the five standards and increased student achievement. The second study found that achievement gains peaked when teachers transformed their pedagogy and used the structure as specified by the standards (Doherty, Hilberg, Pinal, and Tharp, 2003).

## Culturally Responsive Curriculum

Culturally relevant curriculum (CRC) is often debated in the context of a larger issue; the validity of a multicultural approach to education. A commonly-held view of multicultural or culturally pluralistic curricula views this approach as a way to improve academic performance and enhance self-esteem among students whose racial, ethnic, or language heritage differs from that of the Anglo-European population (McCarthy, 1994; Association for the Advancement of Health Education, 1994). A result of this perspective is the belief that an inclusive curriculum will promote harmony and reduce conflict between ethnic groups (Heller & Hawkins, 1994). However, many educators view CRC as an invaluable asset that benefits all students (Series Looks, 1993). Goal three of the original National Education Goals includes an objective to increase the level of knowledge of all students about the country's diverse cultural heritage (Gronlund, 1993).

On the other hand, some critics argue that multicultural education is essentially polarizing and that school curricula should be organized around the nation's common culture (Ravitch, 1991-1992). Proponents argue that the goal of a pluralistic curriculum is to present truth, acknowledge differences, and explore commonalities (Hilliard, 1991-1992). Many educators do not incorporate into their curriculum a critical examination of the Anglo-European ideology that drives traditional public school education (McCarthy, 1994). Curriculum that is culturally responsive takes advantage of students' cultural backgrounds rather than attempting to overrule them.

Several checklists for evaluating instructional materials can be found in the literature on culturally responsive curriculum. Gollniack and Chinn (1991) identify six forms of subtle and blatant bias that teachers should look for in textbooks and other instructional materials: invisibility, stereotyping, selectivity and imbalance, unreality, fragmentation and isolation, and language bias. There is also a ten-item checklist created by Chion-Kenney (1994) which addresses concerns of bias against Native Americans found in textbooks. Some very typical, and inappropriate, representations of minorities in a classroom setting include the *side-bar approach*, the *superhero syndrome*, the *foods and festivals approach*, the *heroes and holidays approach*, and the *one size fits all view*. These representations occur frequently in textbooks where the experiences are limited to a few isolated events, frequently reduced to a box or side-bar set apart from the rest of the text. Another frequent misrepresentation of certain ethnic groups occurs when only exceptional individuals, like the *superheroes* of history from among that race or cultural group, are acknowledged. Furthermore, Gollnick and Chinn argue that some instructional materials frequently reflect cultural bias through a *one size fits all* generalization which implies that there is a single Hispanic, African, Asian, or Native American culture. A perspective such as this fails to acknowledge the considerable cultural diversity that exists within each of these groups (Escamilla, 1993).

According to Williams (1997), when designing a curriculum, it may be beneficial for teachers to research the various range of cultural norms relevant to their individual classrooms. For example, students may be more or less comfortable with asserting themselves in the classroom, sharing what they know, or asking for help depending upon cultural norms regarding what is polite or respectful within given cultures. Students may

have been taught to behave in more dominant or subservient ways based on culturally accepted gender roles. Culturally responsive teachers recognize that students may be at different stages of acculturation. They design lesson plans that take students' cultures into consideration. Astute teachers will judiciously detect and eliminate stereotypical information and use culturally relevant information that is essential to developing and improving instruction.

### Culturally Responsive Policies

According to The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, culturally responsive institutional policies educate, inform, emancipate, and create access. Furthermore, they are equitable. (Zion, Powerpoint presentation, August 16, 2005, Wisconsin Summer Institute). The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems recommends that cultural responsiveness be specifically discussed in the school's mission statement and that goals related to culturally responsive practice be included in the school's improvement plan. In addition, the school's commitment to and policies regarding culturally responsive education should be explicitly stated in the school handbook (Zion, Powerpoint presentation, August 16, 2005, Wisconsin Summer Institute). According to Shelly Zion (2005) of The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, every educational policy-maker and educator should self-assess and ask the following questions of their institution and its policies:

- How do classroom policies affect different kinds of learners?
- How do school policies affect different kinds of learners?
- How do district or state policies affect different kinds of learners?
- What policies help practitioners reach out to their students?

## Culturally Responsive Institutionalized Practices

Zion (2005) says that teachers should regularly and openly participate in reflective dialogue related to culturally responsive education and curriculum change. Faculty and staff should accept responsibility for achieving a culturally responsive learning environment. In addition, Zion states that every educator should self-assess and ask the following questions of their institution and its practices:

- What do you see as barriers to access, participation, and equity in your systems?
- What are you doing that is assisting with the removal of those barriers?
- What do you need to continue to create opportunities for access, participation, and equity?

In *Equity for Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students in Science Education*, Lee (2003) presents a synthesis of major issues and research findings for effective classroom practices in multicultural science education. Specifically, Lee examines how teachers articulate the relationship between traditional ways of knowing and Western science. By analyzing extensive recent research related to teaching linguistically diverse students, Lee (2003) determined that teachers from all backgrounds can provide effective instruction when they have an understanding of their students' linguistic and cultural experiences. In addition, Lee (2003) found that recent efforts to provide culturally congruent science instruction show that when culture and linguistic background are used as intellectual resources, students have increased science achievement. This research focuses attention on the fact that an instructional congruence approach will emphasize the role of instruction as teachers explore the relationship of academic disciplines with their students' cultural and linguistic knowledge and devise ways to link the two (Lee, 2003).

According to Lee (2003), one of the most critical and necessary culturally responsive practices of educators is to explicitly teach students about the dominant culture's rules and norms, rather than expecting students to acquire them on their own. To illustrate this, he points out the fact that rules of scientific inquiry encourage students to ask questions and find answers on their own. However, this is not typically known by students from non-Western cultures.

### Culturally Responsive Learning Environments

In the article, *Creating a Culturally Responsive Learning Environment for African American Students*, Mary F. Howard-Hamilton (2005) suggests that the literature in the classroom should be representative of the various cultural groups present in the school. She argues the importance of a visually-rich environment with posters and displays that are representative of the various cultural groups present in the school. Furthermore, she explains the value of teachers presenting lessons that represent real experiences of non-dominant groups instead of focusing on the accomplishments of a few heroic characters. According to Williams (1997), teachers should be sensitive to stereotypes and multicultural representation in posters, literature, and learning center materials. Williams (1997) argues that culturally responsive teachers ensure that the materials in their learning environment reflect diverse populations of learners. Research has shown that some ethnic groups of students prefer to study together in small groups (Banks, 1991). Culturally responsive teaching may involve creating more opportunities to participate in cooperative grouping situations for students whose cultural preference is to have a socially constructed learning environment.

## Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction

Many urban schools in Chattanooga have a majority population of African American students who speak African American Vernacular English (AAVE). These same schools employ a majority population of White middle class teachers who view AAVE as an inferior, non-standard form of slang. With regard to culturally responsive literacy instruction, there is an urgent need to address the imbalance between AAVE speakers and their language comprehension (the critical goal of reading). The role of culture and language is vitally important to literacy learning (Labov, 1995). Historically, African American children who speak AAVE have not experienced high levels of academic success because their particular literacy needs go unaddressed, as they are encouraged, even forced, to assimilate into the mainstream (Labov, 2001). When addressing literacy needs of students who employ African American Vernacular English (AAVE), cultural and linguistic differences should be recognized and respected in order to appropriately serve these children (White-Clark, 2005). Effective literacy instruction should build upon cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the different ways of making meaning, and prior knowledge that children bring to the classroom (LeMoine, 2001).

### *Contrastive Analysis*

Most teacher preparation programs have one required multicultural class, if that. New teachers are often culturally unaware and insensitive to the specific needs of their students as a result. Thus, beginning teachers often become discouraged and discontinue working in urban schools or they leave education all together (Adger, 2003). Some of them spend their entire career with negative and inaccurate perceptions and beliefs regarding their students and what they are capable of accomplishing (Delpit, 2002). Kelli



Harris-Wright (1997) suggests that contrastive analysis is a culturally responsive way to teach language arts and literacy skills to students who employ dialects and vernacular other than Standard English (SE). Contrastive analysis is supposed to help students develop an awareness of the grammatical differences between home language and school language, but in a non-judgmental and sensitive manner. The approach requires a rigorous amount of analysis by students and theorists suggest that students will naturally learn to code-switch between language varieties and choose the appropriate language for particular situations (Harris-Wright, 1997).

### *Teachers' Perceptions*

Although AAVE has been clearly shown to be a systematic, rule-governed linguistic system, it appears that a number of non-AAVE speakers continue to view it as an inferior, unequal linguistic system when compared to Standard English (Baugh, 1999). Teachers sometimes form negative perceptions of students as a result. This can have adverse effects on AAVE speakers' academic educational achievements. Because reading is a two-step process for these students, they are at a huge disadvantage (Wheeler, 2006). According to Labov (1995) a paradigm shift needs to take place in education which will result in more of an autoethnographic reflexivity focus in teacher preparation and professional development. Teachers are going to have to learn how to be more culturally responsive, particularly when it comes to teaching literacy skills.

### *Bilingualism*

Authors Apthorp, D'Amato, and Richardson (1993) published a review of research on the effectiveness of particular education programs and practices for improving Native American student achievement in English and mathematics. Their findings indicated that

relationships between improved student achievement and certain programs were found. One such relationship indicates that teaching indigenous language and dialect first, followed by instruction in learning to read and write English is an effective way to promote bilingualism. Moreover, using culturally congruent materials and instruction in math was also shown to increase achievement (Apthorp, D'Amato, & Richardson, 2003).

In a review of research related to American Indian and Alaskan Native assimilationist schooling, Lipka, in *Schooling for Self-Determination: Research on Effects of Including Native Language and Culture in the Schools*, stated that “Leaving local knowledge and language at the schoolhouse door was resulting in subtractive bilingualism, that is, that many students were failing to attain academic competence in English while at the same time losing knowledge of their Indigenous languages and cultures” (Lipka, 2002, p. 1).

#### *Text Talks*

Conrad, Gong, Sipp, and Wright (2004) studied three second grade classrooms that were perceived to be culturally responsive. In these educationally diverse settings, a culturally responsive framework for teaching was used in combination with Text Talk (a strategy generally used with young children during read-alouds to foster oral language development and comprehension) to determine the level of culturally responsive literacy instruction. A common practice by the teachers in these classrooms was to carefully construct questions that linked the students' background knowledge with the text (Conrad, Gong, Sipp, & Wright, 2004).

Culturally responsive teaching builds on prior knowledge and experiences. It attempts to increase academic achievement by making learning more culturally relevant to

students' frames of reference. Teachers in these classrooms carefully choose texts so that students will be able to make real-life connections (Conrad, Gong, Sipp, & Wright, 2004). This study found that the majority of students in these classrooms demonstrated deep and insightful thinking and responses (Conrad, Gong, Sipp, & Wright, 2004). The authors strongly suggest that teachers build students' vocabulary knowledge by selecting words that can be part of everyday speaking vocabulary, while using examples to connect unfamiliar words to the background experiences of students (Conrad, Gong, Sipp, & Wright, 2004).

### Culturally Responsive Social Development

Lisa Delpit, author of *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*, argues that students should be given regular opportunities to participate in conversations which allow them to explore their own cultural identities and the ways in which those identities affect relationships with teachers and peers. When issues regarding culture arise in the classroom, teachers should take advantage of these opportunities for meaningful learning. Delpit suggests that teachers facilitate group problem-solving activities centered on topics that are relevant to the cultures represented in the class (Delpit, 1995). Culturally responsive educators understand the verbal and nonverbal communication styles of cultures other than their own; this allows them to facilitate comfortable social interactions among peers and with the teacher. It is common for teachers to expect students to provide eye contact, take turns, speak one at a time, and use body language that shows they are being attentive. However, culturally responsive teachers recognize that students may deviate from these expectations due to cultural norms. For example, African American cultures sometimes use call-and-response banter

when communicating, Latino cultures at times talk along with speakers to show support for what is being said, and Hawaiian cultures often communicate more effectively by storytelling than by quick replies (Gay, 2000). Problems in the classroom can result if teachers do not understand these differences or fail to find ways to integrate them into the classroom (Delpit, 1995).

In *Schooling for Self-Determination*, Lipka reviews the educational effects of assimilationist schooling and later efforts to create schools supportive of American Indian and Alaska Native self-determination. Lipka explores the importance of dual-immersion in order to use students' native language as the language of instruction while responsively integrating two cultures simultaneously (Lipka, 2002). Lipka argues that this approach is socially beneficial to the minority students, as well as the students from the dominant culture (Lipka, 2002).

### Culturally Responsive Assessment

The tools that educators and schools use to assess students play critical roles in educational policy and practice. Even so, it is difficult to find teachers who will express full confidence in the ability of high-stakes, standardized tests. Traditionally, minority students and students from backgrounds of poverty have been at a huge disadvantage with such tests (Hood, 1998). However, Stafford Hood suggests that "Our inability to fully address these shortcomings may in part be due to our continued treatment of examinees' cultural backgrounds as a source of 'error variance' in our development and validation of our assessment tools that should be disregarded rather than an integral consideration in this process (p.1). He believes that assessment tools should incorporate cultural context in order to effectively measure constructs such as academic achievement.

The claim that performance-based assessments are more likely to provide a fairer assessment of what students of color have learned as a result of schooling implies that these assessments are culturally fair or possibly more responsive to students' cultural backgrounds (Bracey, 1993). Stafford Hood argues that this perspective forces one to critically consider the merits of developing assessment approaches that incorporate the basic tenets of culturally responsive pedagogical strategies. He maintains that such assessments should be grounded in the cultural context of diverse groups of examinees. Dr. Hood (1998) conducted a study to assess culturally responsive performance tasks and found that they resulted in an increased academic performance and more accurate assessment of African American students.

Audrey Qualls, author of the article *Culturally Responsive Assessment: Development Strategies and Validity Issues*, explores the various issues related to culturally responsive assessment in the Summer 1998 issue of *The Journal for Negro Education*. In it, she explains how important it is for teachers and educational leaders to be able to detect offensiveness in test items. In a culturally responsive setting, teachers and educational leaders also need to be able to detect unfair penalties in test items. In an attempt to be more culturally sensitive and fair, many educational assessment experts now suggest regularly conducting judgmental reviews to detect and eliminate biased test items. Bias-review panels should consist dominantly or exclusively of minority groups and empirical analyses should be regularly conducted to detect and eliminate biased test items.

## Cultural Competence

A key term that shows up in the culturally responsive literature is *cultural competence*. There are a number of definitions for cultural competence. In *Cultural Competence: A Primer for Educators*, Jerry V. Diller and Jean Moule (2005), define cultural competence as the ability to successfully teach students who come from different cultures other than your own. It entails mastering certain personal and interpersonal sensitivities, having a keen sense of awareness, learning specific bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching (Diller & Moule, 2005). The Oregon State Action for Educational Leadership Project (SAELP) completed an analysis of the literature regarding cultural competence and concluded the following:

- Cultural competence is based on a commitment to social justice and equity.
- Culture refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communication, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and norms of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups.
- Cultural competence is a developmental process occurring at individual and system levels that evolves and is sustained over time. Recognizing that individuals begin with specific lived experiences and biases, and that working to accept multiple worldviews is a difficult choice and task.
- Cultural competence requires that individuals and organizations demonstrate the capacity to value diversity, engage in self reflection, effectively facilitate the dynamics of difference, acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge, and adapt

to the diversity and cultural contexts of students, families, and communities they serve.

- Culturally competent individuals operate from a defined set of values and principles that enable them to work effectively in a cross-cultural manner.
- Culturally competent organizations institutionalize, incorporate, evaluate, and advocate cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership, policymaking, administration, practice, and service delivery while systematically involving staff, students, families, key stakeholders, and communities. (State Action for Educational Leadership Project {SAELP}, 2005).

The literature that explores the requisites of culturally competent teachers is scarce. Little research exists on what works and does not work in developing cross-cultural competence in individuals and systems. At this point in time, evaluation is typically conducted at the program evaluation level. It is short-term in nature and it primarily relies on self-assessing for advances in attitude and knowledge levels (Haines, Lynch, & Winton, 2000). Most training materials typically focus on the cultural awareness or sensitivity level, as opposed to competence level (Haines, Lynch, & Winton, 2000).

In the report, *Moving towards cross-cultural competence in lifelong personnel development: A review of literature*, authors Haines, Lynch, and Winton (2000) describe models and strategies for developing individual competence. They extensively review the *Cross-Cultural Competence Continuum* developed by Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989). In this model, the continuum includes cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural precompetence and cultural proficiency (Cross,

Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs, 1989). The authors also review other models which suggest that cross-cultural competence is not a fixed set of skills that can be obtained or mastered, but rather developing cross-cultural competence is an ongoing process that involves lifelong learning (Haines, Lynch, & Winton, 2000). According to the authors, there is far from enough research existing that explores the ways in which to promote competencies, what specific strategies promote changes in cultural attitude, and the ways in which changes can be measured (Haines, Lynch, & Winton, 2000). Although there are some measurements that do exist, they seem to primarily rely on self-reporting and they have a tendency to be inaccurate (Haines, Lynch, & Winton, 2000). The authors suggest that teachers do the following, not only to increase students' cultural competence, but also to increase their achievement:

- Move beyond an additive approach in which content information about cultures is added to the curriculum rather than utilized to transform the curriculum.
- Examine the hidden curriculum of those in power; be aware of attitudes, policies, beliefs, etc. that perpetuate power relationships and cultural hegemony, and impede the progress of those who do not understand this curriculum.
- Address staff development practices. Ensure that there is both top-down and bottom-up sharing and reflecting. Make sure that collegial support is in place; think big and start small; engage the participants in experimental activities, implement procedures for on-going support, feedback, and monitoring, and consider the contributions and impact of technology (Haines, Lynch, & Winton, 2000).
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## Summary

The literature review revealed some common denominators that are present in all culturally responsive practices. The major contributions from the field of culturally responsive teaching were used to determine what facets of the pedagogy would be addressed in the domains of the C.A.R.E. In reviewing the C.A.R.E. instrument, all of the common characteristics explored in the literature review were present in the survey.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This chapter describes the population and sample, variables, research questions, research design and methodology, instrumentation and reliability, and data analysis methods of this research. As previously stated, the primary purpose of this inquiry was to establish Benwood educators' perceptions related to culturally responsive teaching. An additional purpose was to determine what educators and policy makers perceive to be the critical aspects of culturally responsive teaching and to use that information to make the C.A.R.E. more valid and reliable. Moreover, analyzing two contrasting populations of teachers to determine perceptions of culturally responsive teaching was meant to provide critical information for Hamilton County, the Benwood Foundation and the Public Education Foundation.

In the spring of 2009, the C.A.R.E. was distributed to educators in Benwood I and Benwood II schools. In order to answer the research questions for this study, the following design was utilized to conduct the research.

#### Design of the Study

This study was a survey methodology that consisted of a mixed-methods approach. The researcher used various sources of information from multiple approaches to gain new insights into teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive teaching practices. For purposes of standardization, survey questions were presented in the C.A.R.E. questionnaire. A comparative analysis was conducted to determine any significant differences between the two groups of educators. In the book *Basics of Qualitative*

*Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Strauss and Corbin (1998) say that comparative analysis is an effective way to explain differences and similarities of groups.

In addition to the distribution of the survey, educators had the opportunity to participate in qualitative interviews for the specific purpose of sharing feedback regarding the instrument (The C.A.R.E.).

### Methods and Procedures

The researcher presented an overview of the research proposal to various school leaders and policy makers from the Benwood Schools at a Benwood Principal's meeting held on March 26, 2009. The researcher provided principals with a copy of the C.A.R.E. and answered any questions they had about the process. The researcher delivered the surveys to each school 1-2 weeks after presenting at the March Benwood Principal's meeting. The researcher instructed principals to present the C.A.R.E. to teachers at faculty meetings or during their April professional development sessions. The researcher provided principals with specific guidelines to share with teachers regarding the completion and submission of the survey.

The C.A.R.E. was distributed for the purposes mentioned above in the Phase I Benwood schools and the Benwood Phase II schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Participants were provided with a cover letter that informed them of the researcher's contact information in case they had any questions about the process. Every certified educator in each of the Benwood Schools (administrators, classroom teachers, guidance counselors, related arts teachers, Pre-K teachers, English as a second language teachers, special education teachers, literacy leaders, and lead teachers) was given the survey. Non-

certified staff (attendance clerks, educational assistants, family partnership specialists/parent coordinators, custodians, cafeteria staff, and secretaries) did not take the survey. Instructions directed educators to place the completed surveys in a provided large envelope. It was expected that it would take 10-20 minutes to complete the survey.

The researcher instructed principals to send the completed surveys back by April 30 via the school system's internal mail system. If any teacher needed additional time to complete the survey, the researcher made arrangements to return to the school to retrieve the surveys. Upon the return of the surveys, an Excel file for each of the sixteen participating schools was created.

The researcher created a template with a total of thirty-three cells for the responses to the C.A.R.E. and an additional fifteen cells for demographic data. Each of the files was named in a way that allowed the researcher to determine which responses were Benwood I schools and which ones were Benwood II schools. For example, the Benwood Phase I schools were named BI1, BI2, BI3, BI4, etc. and the Benwood Phase II schools were named BII1, BII2, BII3, BII4, etc. To protect the anonymity of the schools, the researcher created a coded identification sheet that identified each specific school. Once all responses were entered, the researcher ran a series of statistical tests to aid in analyzing the data. The researcher visited each of the Benwood schools and conducted a cultural artifact analysis of items that provided insights into the school's commitment to culturally responsive teaching, or lack thereof. For example, the researcher read and carefully analyzed each school's school improvement plan and student and parent handbooks and school brochures.

Preliminary conclusions reached through this research were compared with data collected through methods such as artifacts analysis and key informant interviews to determine the perceived levels of cultural responsiveness in each set of schools. There was a collection of demographic data from each set of Benwood schools, including teachers' educational preparation, types and amounts of professional development activities, and cultural and economic backgrounds of the faculties. Then, a qualitative analysis was conducted to compare the perceptions among the two populations of educators.

#### Instrumentation

Isaac and Michael (1990) state that, "Surveys are the most widely used technique in education and behavioral sciences for the collection of data. They are a means of gathering information that describes the nature and extent of a specified set of data ranging from physical counts and frequencies to attitudes and opinions" (p. 128). The C.A.R.E. is a survey that requires those taking it to reflect on their own practices and beliefs and assess themselves and their learning environments. Babbie (1990) stated that a survey has three general objectives: (1) to describe a population, (2) to explain differences in sub-groups, or (3) to explore little known areas of a population. These are all things that the researcher sought to do with this project.

The C.A.R.E. was developed based on a review of the literature, interviews, and existing surveys. The C.A.R.E. examines thirty-three indicators divided into seven domains: culturally responsive policies, culturally responsive practices, culturally responsive learning environments, culturally responsive literacy instruction, culturally

responsive social development, culturally responsive assessment, and culturally responsive community engagement.

Content validity was established by utilizing C. H. Lawshe's widely-used method of measuring content validity. This is essentially a method for gauging agreement among raters or judges regarding how essential a particular item is. Lawshe (1975) proposed that each of the subject matter expert raters (SMEs) on the judging panel respond to the following question for each item: "Is the skill or knowledge measured by this item *essential, useful, but not essential, or not necessary* to the performance of the construct?" The researcher used the members of the dissertation committee as SMEs. In addition, the researcher created and used a codebook for survey data and elicited feedback about the C.A.R.E via qualitative interviews with volunteering participants.

#### *Reliability of the C.A.R.E. Instrument*

The Summary Item Statistics was used to determine the reliability of the C.A.R.E. instrument. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the C.A.R.E. as a whole was determined to be .928 and the reliabilities of the seven domains ranged from .720 to .911.

Table 3.1  
*Reliability of the C.A.R.E*

Scale	Number of Items	N	Cronbach's Alpha
Institutional Policies	4	322	.911
Institutional Practices	5	322	.845
Learning Environment	4	322	.833
Literacy Instruction	7	322	.872
Social Development	4	322	.816
Assessment	6	322	.836
Community Engagement	3	322	.741
Total Scale	33	322	.928
Pearson Correlations- Grand Total		.928 (strong)	

## Subjects

The population for this study consisted of teachers in two sets of schools (Benwood Phase I schools and Benwood Phase II schools) in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Population size for each school during the 2008-09 school year is represented in Table 3.2. This sample was selected by identifying the certified educators in Benwood schools. Based on the population size, the sample size was sufficiently representative.

Table 3.2

### *Benwood Teacher Demographics*

School	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Native American	Other	Total	Male	Female
School 1	23	0	1	0	0	0	24	1	23
School 2	23	0	0	0	0	0	23	1	22
School 3	30	4	0	0	0	0	34	4	30
School 4	25	12	1	0	0	0	38	2	36
School 5	26	8	0	0	0	0	34	5	29
School 6	29	5	1	0	0	0	35	4	31
School 7	43	4	2	0	0	0	49	3	46
School 8	23	22	0	0	0	0	45	4	41
School 9	27	1	0	0	0	0	28	3	25
School 10	14	10	0	1	0	0	25	3	22
School 11	34	4	0	0	0	0	38	5	33
School 12	18	17	0	0	0	0	35	2	33
School 13	35	7	0	3	0	0	45	3	42
School 14	25	8	0	0	1	0	34	5	29
School 15	42	3	0	0	0	0	45	3	42
School 16	11	20	0	0	0	1	32	3	29
Total	428	125	5	4	1	1	564	51	513

### Independent Variables

The independent variables in this study were:

1. The status of the school (Benwood Phase I or Benwood Phase II)
2. The demographic questions attached to the C.A.R.E.

### Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in this study were the seven domains, and the thirty-three indicators composing the survey:

1. Culturally Responsive Institutional Policies- 4 indicators
2. Culturally Responsive Institutional Practices- 5 indicators
3. Culturally Responsive Learning Environment- 4 indicators
4. Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction- 7 indicators
5. Culturally Responsive Social Development- 4 indicators
6. Culturally Responsive Assessment- 6 indicators
7. Culturally Responsive Community Engagement- 3 indicators

### Research Questions and Related Null Hypotheses

The 7 domains and 33 indicators composing the survey represented the dependent variables for this research; and the Benwood status and demographic questions represented the independent variables. There were three research questions and three null hypotheses. This study addressed the following questions and null hypotheses:

1. Do the perceptions regarding culturally responsive education differ between educators in Benwood I schools and Benwood II schools?



Null hypothesis for Question 1: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of levels culturally responsiveness between teachers in Benwood Phase I and teachers in Benwood Phase II schools.

2. Is there a higher proportion of educators serving students from socioeconomic backgrounds similar to their own in Benwood I schools or Benwood II schools?

Null hypothesis for Question 2: There is a similar proportion of educators serving students from socioeconomic backgrounds similar to their own in Benwood Phase I and Benwood Phase II schools.

3. Between Benwood I schools and Benwood II schools which group of educators has had more professional development regarding culturally responsive teaching?

Null hypothesis for Question 3: Teachers in Benwood Phase I schools have had no more professional development than teachers in Benwood II schools.

### Data Analysis

Each of the research questions was carefully examined and appropriate data analysis was determined. To answer each of the research questions, as well as to report data from the demographic sheet, descriptive statistics were utilized to describe the basic features of the data gathered from the study in various ways. A descriptives table was created to display the sample size, mean, and standard deviation for both Benwood I and Benwood II schools.

A null hypothesis was developed for each question and the data from the SPSS output files were analyzed and displayed in tables. A confidence interval of 95% was utilized, and if the 2-tail significance was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. If the 2-tail significance was more than 0.05, the null hypothesis was accepted.

The researcher provided simple summaries about the sample and the measures. For each of the research questions, the researcher used tables to summarize the data or facilitate comparisons. Specifically, t-tests were used to answer questions one and three and cross-tabulations and chi-square were used to answer question 2.

### Summary

Chapter III described the purposes of this research and the various aspects of the methodology of the study including the research questions posed. In addition, the chapter described the C.A.R.E. instrument, the subjects of the research, the method of data collection, and the treatment of the data.

In Chapter IV, the results of the data analyses are reported. The SPSS statistical program was used in the treatment of the data. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations of responses for each statement on the C.A.R.E. were tabulated and displayed in tables.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### Introduction

This chapter is divided into several sections. The first section presents a brief description of the instrumentation, the research questions, and the hypotheses. This is followed by a section that deals with the research questions, testing the hypotheses, and the item analysis. The final section describes the data regarding the C.A.R.E. instrument, which was obtained through key informant interviews.

#### Instrumentation

Based on the Cronbach's alpha reliability output, the following results were obtained for the seven domains and the C.A.R.E. instrument: The instrument as a whole had a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .928 and the reliabilities of the seven domains were as follows:

1. Culturally Responsive Institutional Policies- .911
2. Culturally Responsive Institutional Practices- .845.
3. Culturally Responsive Learning Environment- .833.
4. Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction- .872.
5. Culturally Responsive Social Development- .816.
6. Culturally Responsive Assessment- .836.
7. Culturally Responsive Community Engagement- .741.

The returned responses of the C.A.R.E. instrument were scored by the researcher. The survey instrument was designed with a Lickert Scale which facilitated the assignment of codes to the responses (1=Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Frequently,

5= Always). Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) software package.

Questions from the survey were categorized into the seven domains for analysis and the instrument itself was divided into two major sections (The C.A.R.E. section and the demographic data section). The first section of the survey contained 33 performance indicators. These items were divided into seven domains.

- The first domain, Culturally Responsive Policies, contained four items.
- The second domain, Culturally Responsive Institutionalized Practices, contained five items.
- The third domain, Culturally Responsive Learning Environments, contained four items.
- The fourth domain, Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction, contained seven items.
- The fifth domain, Culturally Responsive Social Development, contained four items.
- The sixth domain, Culturally Responsive Institutional Policies, contained six items.
- The seventh domain, Culturally Responsive Community Engagement, contained three items.

Tables were provided to show teacher responses to the C.A.R.E. These tables include the range of the means for the 33 items. I hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the perceptions of levels cultural responsiveness between teachers in Benwood Phase I and teachers in Benwood Phase II schools.

## Research Questions and Testing the Null Hypotheses

The seven domains and 33 indicators represented the dependent variables for this research; and the Benwood status (Phase I or Phase II) and demographic questions represented the independent variables. There were three research questions and three null hypotheses. A descriptives table was created to display the sample sizes, means, and standard deviations for both Benwood I and Benwood II schools. A null hypothesis was developed for each question and the data from the SPSS output files was analyzed and displayed in tables. A confidence interval of 95% was utilized, and if the 2-tail significance was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. If the 2-tail significance was more than 0.05, the null hypothesis was accepted.

### Research Question 1

Question 1: Do the perceptions regarding culturally responsive education differ between teachers in Benwood I schools and Benwood II schools?

The 33 items represented the definitive components of a culturally responsive educational setting. This chapter will report the teacher ratings of educators in Benwood Phase I and Benwood Phase II schools by the seven domains.

Responses to the 33 items in the C.A.R.E and their analysis satisfy Research Question 1: “Do the perceptions regarding culturally responsive education differ between educators in Benwood I schools and Benwood II schools?”

An independent- samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of levels of cultural responsiveness between educators in Benwood Phase I and educators in Benwood Phase II schools.

The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Tables 4.1-4.7 illustrates that the difference in perceptions is significant,  $t(268) = 3.60$ ,  $p = 0.00$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 123.8$ ,  $SD = 18.78$ ) on the average, perceived higher levels of culturally responsive policies and practices in their schools than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 115.4$ ,  $SD = 19.18$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected. These results represent an overall finding based on the  $t$ -test for the survey results as a whole.

Table 4.1  
*Domain I - Culturally Responsive Institutional Policies*

Items for Domain I	Benwood I			Benwood II			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
1. Cultural responsiveness is specifically discussed in the school's mission statement.	175	3.58	1.18	139	3.25	1.06	2.58	.010
2. At least one cultural responsiveness goal is included in the school improvement plan.	171	3.90	1.03	139	3.43	1.21	3.62	.000
3. The school's commitment to and policies regarding culturally responsive education are stated in the school handbook.	172	3.76	1.10	142	3.23	1.14	4.17	.000
4. The school includes at least one culturally responsive education goal as part of the criteria for determining budget allocations.	171	3.87	1.05	139	3.28	1.18	4.64	.000

Table 4.2  
*Domain II - Culturally Responsive Institutional Practices*

Items for Domain II	Benwood I			Benwood II			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
5. Teachers regularly and openly discuss culturally responsive education and curriculum change.	175	3.82	.94	143	3.44	1.03	3.52	.000
6. The faculty and staff have a sense of responsibility for achieving a culturally responsive learning environment.	175	4.13	.80	143	3.81	.87	3.37	.001
7. Teachers regularly relate questions during classroom discussions to real life issues.	174	4.21	.77	144	4.27	.70	-.697	.486
8. Teachers coach students to become active participants in their own learning.	175	4.32	.71	144	4.37	.69	-.693	.489
9. Teachers employ practices that draw on students' prior knowledge and communication skills.	175	4.31	.73	145	4.33	.68	-.295	.768



Table 4.3  
*Domain III - Culturally Responsive Learning Environments*

Items for Domain III	Benwood I			Benwood II			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
10. The literature in the library and classrooms is representative of the various cultural groups present in the school.	176	4.02	.85	145	3.93	.94	.914	.361
11. The school is a print-rich environment with posters and displays that are representative of the various cultural groups present in the school.	176	4.00	.92	144	3.81	.97	1.70	.090
12. Teachers consistently diversify the curriculum by providing materials and knowledge that are outside the mainstream culture.	174	3.86	.81	145	3.70	.85	1.69	.092
13. Teachers present lessons that represent real experiences of non-dominant groups.	176	3.86	.80	145	3.72	.86	1.51	.133

Table 4.4  
*Domain IV - Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction*

Items for Domain IV	Benwood I			Benwood II			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
14. Teachers show respect and appreciation for the linguistic knowledge students bring to school.	175	3.86	.92	144	3.93	.77	-.774	.440
15. Contrastive analysis is effectively utilized to help students develop a conscious and rigorous awareness of the grammatical differences between home speech and school speech.	176	3.84	.97	143	3.55	.89	2.75	.006
16. Teachers choose literature where the narrator uses SE and the characters, in their dialogue, use AAVE, or vice versa.	174	3.42	.93	142	2.90	.95	4.85	.000
17. Students are consistently presented with opportunities to carefully analyze and discuss dialogue contrasts in literature.	175	3.45	.86	143	3.27	1.00	1.64	.103
18. Students are consistently presented with opportunities to choose the language appropriate to the time, place, audience, and communicative purpose.	174	3.50	.88	145	3.28	.94	2.18	.030
19. Students are consistently presented with opportunities to analyze the rules underlying AAVE as well as those generating SE.	174	3.17	1.02	143	2.64	1.03	4.54	.000
20. The teacher utilizes dialect contrasts to facilitate conversations about the underlying structures of language.	175	3.30	1.02	144	3.00	1.00	2.66	.008

Table 4.5  
*Domain V - Culturally Responsive Social Development*

Items for Domain V	Benwood I			Benwood II			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
21. Students regularly participate in conversations which allow them to explore their own cultural identities and the ways in which those identities affect relationships with teachers and peers.	175	3.58	.94	145	3.37	.90	2.03	.043
22. When issues regarding culture arise in the classroom, teachers typically take advantage of the opportunity to explore cultural concepts.	175	3.81	.88	145	3.69	.92	1.08	.283
23. Group problem-solving activities centered around topics that are relevant to the cultures represented in the class are common.	175	3.58	.87	141	3.36	.85	2.19	.029
24. Instruction at this school is cooperative, collaborative, & community oriented.	174	4.21	.81	142	4.11	.77	1.10	.271

Table 4.6  
*Domain VI - Culturally Responsive Assessment*

Items for Domain VI	Benwood I			Benwood II			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
25. Teachers and educational leaders are able to detect offensiveness in test items.	173	4.00	.85	136	3.71	.96	2.85	.005
26. Teachers and educational leaders are able to detect unfair penalties in test items.	173	3.93	.92	137	3.68	.96	2.35	.020
27. Teachers develop and administer performance tasks that are grounded in the cultural context.	173	3.49	.97	138	3.37	.98	.977	.329
28. Judgmental reviews are regularly conducted to detect and eliminate biased test items.	172	2.78	1.21	135	2.80	1.11	-.112	.911
29. Bias-review panels consist dominantly or exclusively of minority groups.	167	2.59	1.20	129	2.44	1.13	1.04	.298
30. Empirical analyses are regularly conducted to detect and eliminate biased test items.	167	2.64	1.21	128	2.53	1.11	.780	.436

Table 4.7  
*Domain VII - Culturally Responsive Community Engagement*

Items for Domain VII	Benwood I			Benwood II			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
31. Teachers seek to understand parents' hopes, concerns and suggestions.	175	4.10	.81	141	4.26	.68	-1.87	.063
32. The school has a parent training component and regularly appries parents of services offered.	175	3.80	1.12	140	3.45	1.27	2.58	.010
33. Teachers at this school are willing to gain the necessary cross-cultural skills for successful exchange and collaboration between home and school.	175	4.09	.86	141	3.91	.94	1.73	.085

### *Domain I- Culturally Responsive Policies*

Indicator 1: Cultural responsiveness is specifically discussed in the school's mission statement. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.1 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(312) = 2.58$ ,  $p = .010$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.58$ ) on the average, perceived higher levels of commitment to cultural responsiveness in their school's mission statements than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.25$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 2: At least one cultural responsiveness goal is included in the school's School Improvement Plan. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.1 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(308) = 3.62$ ,  $p = .000$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.90$ ) on the average, reported that their school included cultural responsiveness goals in their school's School Improvement Plans than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.43$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 3: The school's commitment to and policies regarding culturally responsive education are stated in the school's handbook. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.1 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(312) = 4.17$ ,  $p = .000$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.76$ ) on the average, perceived that their school's commitment to and policies regarding culturally responsive education were stated more often in the handbook than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.23$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 4: The school includes at least one culturally responsive education goal as part of the criteria for determining budget allocations. The independent samples  $t$  test

summarized in Table 4.1 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(308) = 4.64$ ,  $p = .000$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.87$ ) on the average, reported more frequently that they perceive that their schools include cultural responsiveness goals as criteria for budget allocations than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.28$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

*Domain II- Culturally Responsive Institutionalized Practices*

Indicator 5: Teachers regularly and openly discuss culturally responsive education and curriculum change. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.2 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(316) = 3.52$ ,  $p = .000$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.82$ ) on the average, perceived at higher levels that teachers in their school regularly discuss culturally responsive education and curriculum change than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.44$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 6: The faculty and staff have a sense of responsibility for achieving a culturally responsive learning environment. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.2 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(316) = 3.37$ ,  $p = .000$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 4.13$ ) on the average, reported at higher levels a perception that teachers in their schools feel a sense of achieving a culturally responsive learning environment than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.81$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 7: Teachers regularly relate questions during classroom discussions to real life issues. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.2 illustrates that the difference of perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(316) = -.697$ ,  $p = .486$ .

There was not a significant difference between the perceptions of educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M= 4.21$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M= 4.27$ ).

The null hypothesis was accepted.

Indicator 8: Teachers coach students to become active participants in their own learning. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.2 illustrates that the difference of perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(317) = -.693$ ,  $p = .489$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M= 4.32$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M= 4.37$ ) reported similar perceptions regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Indicator 9: Teachers employ practices that draw on students' prior knowledge and communication skills. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.2 illustrates that the difference of perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(318) = -.295$ ,  $p = .768$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M= 4.31$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M= 4.33$ ) reported similar perceptions regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

### *Domain III- Culturally Responsive Learning Environments*

Indicator 10: The literature in the library and classrooms is representative of the various cultural groups present in the school. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.3 illustrates that the difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(319) = .914$ ,  $p = .361$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M= 4.02$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M= 3.93$ ) reported similar perceptions regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.



Indicator 11: The school is a print-rich environment with posters and displays that are representative of the various cultural groups present in the school. The independent samples *t* test summarized in Table 4.3 illustrates that the difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(318) = 1.70, p = .090$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 4.00$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.81$ ) reported similar perceptions regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Indicator 12: Teachers consistently diversify the curriculum by providing materials and knowledge that are outside the mainstream culture. The independent samples *t* test summarized in Table 4.3 illustrates that the difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(317) = 1.69, p = .092$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.86$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.70$ ) reported similar perceptions regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Indicator 13: Teachers present lessons that represent real experiences of non-dominant groups. The independent samples *t* test summarized in Table 4.3 illustrates that the difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(319) = 1.50, p = .133$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.86$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.72$ ) reported similar perceptions regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

#### *Domain IV- Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction*

Indicator 14: Teachers show respect and appreciation for the linguistic knowledge students bring to school. The independent samples *t* test summarized in Table 4.4 illustrates that the difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(317) =$

-.774,  $p = .440$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.86$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.93$ ) reported similar perceptions regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Indicator 15: Contrastive analysis is effectively utilized to help students develop a conscious and rigorous awareness of the grammatical differences between home speech and school speech. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.4 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(317) = 2.75$ ,  $p = .000$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.84$ ) on the average, perceived at higher levels a utilization of contrastive analysis than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.55$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 16: Teachers choose literature where the narrator uses SE and the characters, in their dialogue, use AAVE, or vice versa. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.4 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(317) = 2.75$ ,  $p = .000$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.42$ ) on the average, perceived at higher levels that teachers choose literature to demonstrate that characters, in their dialogue, use AAVE, or vice versa than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 2.90$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 17: Students are consistently presented with opportunities to carefully analyze and discuss dialogue contrasts in literature. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.4 illustrates that the difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(316) = 1.63$ ,  $p = .103$ . There was not a significant difference between the perceptions of educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.45$ ) and the educators in

Benwood Phase II schools ( $M= 3.27$ ) regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Indicator 18: Students are consistently presented with opportunities to choose the language appropriate to the time, place, audience, and communicative purpose. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.4 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(297) = 2.16$ ,  $p = .031$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M= 3.50$ ) on the average, perceived at higher levels of teachers choosing appropriate text for the instructional purpose than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M= 3.28$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 19: Students are consistently presented with opportunities to analyze the rules underlying AAVE as well as those generating SE. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.4 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(315) = 4.54$ ,  $p = .000$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M= 3.17$ ) on the average, perceived at higher levels that students are presented with opportunities to analyze the rules underlying AAVE and SE than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M= 2.64$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 20: The teacher utilizes dialect contrasts to facilitate conversations about the underlying structures of language. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.4 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(317) = 2.65$ ,  $p = .008$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M= 3.30$ ) on the average, perceived at higher levels that teachers utilized dialect contrasts than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M= 3.00$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

#### *Domain V- Culturally Responsive Social Development*

Indicator 21: Students regularly participate in conversations which allow them to explore their own cultural identities and the ways in which those identities affect relationships with teachers and peers. The independent samples *t* test summarized in Table 4.5 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(318) = 1.07$ ,  $p = .043$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.58$ ) on the average, perceived at higher levels that students are presented with opportunities to analyze the rules underlying AAVE and SE than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.37$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 22: When issues regarding culture arise in the classroom, teachers typically take advantage of the opportunity to explore cultural concepts. The independent samples *t* test summarized in Table 4.5 illustrates that the difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(318) = 1.07$ ,  $p = .283$ . There was not a significant difference between the perceptions of educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.81$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.69$ ) regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Indicator 23: Group problem-solving activities centered on topics that are relevant to the cultures represented in the class are common. The independent samples *t* test summarized in Table 4.5 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(314) = 2.19$ ,  $p = .029$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.58$ ) on the average, perceived at higher levels that teachers present culturally relevant group problem solving topics than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.36$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 24: Instruction at this school is cooperative, collaborative, & community oriented. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.5 illustrates that the difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(314) = 1.10$ ,  $p = .271$ . There was not a significant difference between the perceptions of educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 4.21$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 4.11$ ) regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

*Domain VI- Culturally Responsive Assessments*

Indicator 25: Teachers and educational leaders are able to detect offensiveness in test items. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.6 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(307) = 2.84$ ,  $p = .005$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 4.00$ ) on the average, perceived at higher levels that educators at their school were able to detect offensiveness in test items than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.71$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 26: Teachers and educational leaders are able to detect unfair penalties in test items. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.6 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(308) = 2.34$ ,  $p = .020$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.93$ ) on the average, perceived at higher levels that educators at their school were able to detect unfair penalties in test items than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.68$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 27: Teachers develop and administer performance tasks that are grounded in the cultural context. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.6 illustrates that the difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(309) = .977$ ,  $p = .329$ . There was not a significant difference between the perceptions of

educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M= 3.49$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M= 3.37$ ) regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Indicator 28: Judgmental reviews are regularly conducted to detect and eliminate biased test items. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.6 illustrates that the difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(305) = -.112$ ,  $p = .911$ . There was not a significant difference between the perceptions of educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M= 2.78$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M= 2.80$ ) regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Indicator 29: Bias-review panels consist dominantly or exclusively of minority groups. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.6 illustrates that the difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(294) = 1.04$ ,  $p = .298$ . There was not a significant difference between the perceptions of educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M= 2.59$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M= 2.44$ ) regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Indicator 30: Empirical analyses are regularly conducted to detect and eliminate biased test items. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.6 illustrates that the difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(293) = .780$ ,  $p = .436$ . There was not a significant difference between the perceptions of educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M= 2.64$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M= 2.53$ ) regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

#### *Domain VII- Culturally Responsive Community Engagement*

Indicator 31: Teachers seek to understand parents' hopes, concerns and suggestions. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.7 illustrates that the

difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(314) = -1.86$ ,  $p = .063$ .

There was not a significant difference between the perceptions of educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 4.10$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 4.26$ ) regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Indicator 32: The school has a parent training component and regularly apprises parents of services offered. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.7 illustrates that the difference in perceptions for this indicator is significant,  $t(313) = 2.57$ ,  $p = .010$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 3.80$ ) on the average, perceived at higher levels that educators at their school were able to detect unfair penalties in test items than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.45$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Indicator 33: Teachers at this school are willing to gain the necessary cross-cultural skills for successful exchange and collaboration between home and school. The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in Table 4.7 illustrates that the difference in perception for this indicator is not significant,  $t(314) = -1.72$ ,  $p = .085$ . There was not a significant difference between the perceptions of educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 4.09$ ) and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 3.91$ ) regarding this indicator. The null hypothesis was rejected.

## Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked: Is there a higher proportion of teachers serving students from socioeconomic backgrounds similar to their own in Benwood Phase I schools or Benwood Phase II schools? The results of Research Question 2 could very well determine the direction of future research related to this topic because if it is

determined those teachers from a certain socioeconomic background are more culturally aware and responsive in their practices it would make sense to look at this factor more closely. In his book, *Black Students, Middle Class Teachers*, Jawanza Kunjufu argues that African American teachers from backgrounds of poverty are typically more responsive to the plight of African American students (Kunjufu, 2002). Therefore, I had a sincere desire to determine if teachers serving students from cultural backgrounds similar to their students are in fact more culturally aware and responsive in their practices.

Responses to the items dealing with educators' economic backgrounds (in the demographic data section of the survey) and their analysis satisfy Research Question 2. In the demographics section of the survey, the following question was asked: Which of the following best describes your economic status as a child? The following answer choices were given: poverty, middle class, upper middle class, and wealthy. Chi-square was used to analyze this question.

Cross-tabulation was used to determine whether or not there was a significant difference between the economic backgrounds of educators from Benwood I and Benwood II schools. In probability theory and statistics, the chi-square distribution (also chi-squared or  $\chi^2$  distribution) is one of the most widely used theoretical probability distributions in statistics. It is useful because, under reasonable assumptions, easily calculated quantities can be proven to have distributions that approximate to the chi-square distribution if the null hypothesis is true. A chi-square test was conducted to assess whether or not there were any significant differences in socioeconomic backgrounds of educators in Benwood Phase I and educators in Benwood Phase II



schools. The results of the test were not significant, ( $\chi^2 = 34.1, p=.537$ ). The chi-square test is summarized in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8  
*Economic Backgrounds of Educators*

	<u>Benwood I</u>		<u>Benwood II</u>		<u>Total (319)</u>	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Middle Class	113	35%	100	32%	213	67%
Poverty	31	9%	19	6%	50	15%
Upper Middle Class	31	9%	24	9%	55	18%
Wealthy	1	>1%	0	0%	>1	>1%
Total	176	54%	143	47%	319	100%

A majority of educators in both Benwood Phase I schools and Benwood Phase II schools indicated that their economic background as a child could best be described as middle class (35% of participants from Benwood I and 31% of participants from Benwood II). Survey participants were given the following choices: poverty, middle class, upper middle class, and wealthy. A total of 319 participants answered this question (176 from Benwood I and 143 from Benwood II). Overwhelmingly, the majority of participants indicated that they grew up in a middle class background. Specifically, 85% of respondents said that they describe themselves as either middle class or upper middle class.

In Benwood Phase I schools, 9% of participants indicated that they grew up in a background of poverty, and in Benwood II, 6% of participants indicated that they grew up in a background of poverty. In Benwood I, 9% of participants indicated that they grew up in an upper middle class home, and in Benwood II, 8% participants indicated that they

grew up in an upper middle class home. In Benwood I, less than 1% of participants indicated that they grew up wealthy, and in Benwood II, no participants perceived their status as that of wealthy. Overall, these results suggest that the majority of educators in Benwood Phase I schools and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds.

However, the null hypothesis cannot yet be accepted because this test merely proved that there is not a significant difference in the cultural backgrounds of teachers in Benwood I and Benwood II schools. The research question asked a more specific question related to the similarity of cultural backgrounds of students and teachers. The intent of this research was to determine whether or not there were more teachers, in either set of schools, who come from similar backgrounds as their students. Based on the demographic data of students enrolled in Benwood I and Benwood II schools, the majority of students in 16 of 16 schools receive free or reduced lunch, which according to federal guidelines, qualifies them to be categorized as “economically disadvantaged” (retrieved from [www.edu.reportcard.state.tn.us](http://www.edu.reportcard.state.tn.us) on June 21, 2009). In Benwood Phase I schools, all eight schools have a majority of students from backgrounds of poverty (retrieved from [www.edu.reportcard.state.tn.us](http://www.edu.reportcard.state.tn.us) on June 21, 2009). Since it has been established that the majority of teachers in these schools are from a middle class background, one can conclude that the majority of teachers in Benwood Phase I schools are teaching students from backgrounds different than their own.

In Benwood Phase II schools, all eight schools also have a majority of students who can be classified as “economically disadvantaged” (retrieved from [www.edu.reportcard.state.tn.us](http://www.edu.reportcard.state.tn.us) on June 21, 2009). Since we have already established

that the majority of teachers in Benwood Phase II schools are from middle class backgrounds, one can conclude that most teachers in Benwood II schools are also teaching students from backgrounds different than their own.

Based on information retrieved from the school profiles on the Tennessee State website, the level of poverty is much greater in the Benwood Phase I schools than in Benwood Phase II schools. However, every school represented within both sets of schools meets the state's criteria for being categorized as an "economically disadvantaged" school.

Table 4.9 shows the breakdown of the economic statuses of students in each of the Benwood Phase I schools and table 4.10 shows the breakdown of the economic statuses of students in each of the Benwood Phase II schools (retrieved from [www.edu.reportcard.state.tn.us](http://www.edu.reportcard.state.tn.us) on June 21, 2009).

Table 4.9  
*Socioeconomic Status for Benwood I Schools*

School	Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged
School 1	96%
School 2	96%
School 3	96%
School 4	97%
School 5	93%
School 6	98%
School 7	99%
School 8	99%

Table 4.10  
*Socioeconomic Status for Benwood II Schools*

School	Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged
School 1	59%
School 2	79%
School 3	90%
School 4	69%
School 5	67%
School 6	82%
School 7	91%
School 8	78%

Based on responses to the cultural background questions on the C.A.R.E. and on the data obtained from the Tennessee Department of Education website regarding economic statuses of students in Benwood schools, it was determined that there is a significant difference between the economic backgrounds of teachers in Benwood schools and their students. However, there it was determined that there was not a significant difference between the socioeconomic backgrounds of the teachers in the two sets of schools. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

### Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked: Between Benwood I schools and Benwood II schools, which group of teachers has had more professional development regarding culturally responsive teaching? The results of Research Question 3 could very well determine the direction of future research related to this topic because if it is determined that teachers with more professional development have more positive perceptions of culturally responsive teaching practices, it would be logical to further examine the impact of professional development as it directly relates to culturally responsive teaching. To answer Research Question 3, a series of items were developed for the demographic data

portion of the survey instrument. I used the first five demographic questions from the demographic data sheet to determine levels of relevant professional development. These questions were:

- Have you read Ruby Payne's *Framework for Understanding Poverty*?
- Have you participated in any professional development designed around Ruby Payne's research?
- Have you read Martin Haberman's *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty* book?
- Have you participated in any professional development designed around Martin Haberman's research?
- Were you an Osborne Fellow?

The books that were chosen for the demographic questions (*Framework for Understanding Poverty* and *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty*) were used because they are based on the work that many scholars in the field argue have had the most impact on the culturally responsive education pedagogy (retrieved from [www.knowledgeloom.com](http://www.knowledgeloom.com) on June 19, 2009). In addition, national professional development seminars and workshop frameworks have also been developed around these publications.

Osborne Fellows was an incentive component of the Benwood Initiative that offered teachers in Benwood Phase I schools a free, specialized Master's degree which focused on specific approaches for teaching culturally diverse student populations from backgrounds of poverty. Thus, one would ascertain that a person who had gone through this program would have been exposed to a plethora of professional development pertaining to culturally responsive teaching.

For Research Question 3: “Between Benwood I schools and Benwood II schools which group of teachers has had more professional development regarding culturally responsive teaching?” the first five questions from the demographic section, which dealt specifically with professional development related to culturally responsive teaching, were used to determine levels of professional development for each group of educators.

An independent samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate the null hypothesis that educators in Benwood Phase I schools have had more professional development than educators in Benwood II schools. The independent samples *t* test summarized in Table 4.11 illustrates that the difference in professional development regarding culturally responsive teaching practices is significant,  $t(233) = 6.37, p = 0.00$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = .25, SD = .43$ ) on the average, have experienced higher levels of professional development related to culturally responsive teaching than educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = .03, SD = .16$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected. Table 4.11 is a descriptives table that displays the sample size, mean, and standard deviation for both groups.

Table 4.11  
*Teacher Levels of Professional Development*

	N	M	SD
Benwood I	177	.25	.437
Benwood II	145	.03	.164

### Qualitative Interviews

Participants who took the C.A.R.E. were given an opportunity to participate in interviews for the purpose of giving feedback on the C.A.R.E. instrument. Sixteen

educators volunteered to share feedback regarding the survey. The purpose of these interviews was not to explore issues related to culturally responsive education, but rather to provide a means for obtaining ways in which to make the survey itself more user friendly. Participants were given an additional copy of the survey to utilize during the phone interview. The following questions were used to guide the interviews:

- Did you have any difficulty reading/understanding the survey?
- Can you think of anything that may have made the survey easier to read/understand?
- Did you notice any typos or mistakes in the survey?
- Was there any language in the survey that you found to be confusing, misleading, or offensive?
- Were there any unfamiliar terms in the questions that you were not able to locate in the Definition of Terms?
- Can you think of anything that might be added to the survey to make it better?

The following is a list of suggestions from participants. Each one of the suggestions was carefully considered and deemed to be valuable. The appropriate changes were made to the instrument to make it more valid and reliable.

- Use Scantron to make the survey easier to take.
- Number the questions on the survey to make it easier to read.
- On the demographic data sheet, specifically instruct participants to round-off the amount of years teaching experience to the nearest year because some participants had only taught half of a year and they were unsure as to whether they should put “0” or “1.”

- On items in the Literacy Domain, change “AAVE” to “Dialects other than SE” because one of the Benwood II schools had no African American students, but they do have a large population of students who use Southern Dialect. The wording implies that AAVE is the opposite of Standard English and that may be offensive.
- In the definition of terms, change offensive language in the definition of AAVE (Ebonics) and capitalize the word “Black.”
- In the definition of terms, the following terms are defined, but do not show up in the survey questions: cultural compatibility, cultural synchronization, diversity, and sociolinguistics.
- The terms “cross-cultural” and “minority” are in the instrument questions but are not defined in the “terms” section.
- Add a “comments” section at the end.
- Add a “questions?” section at the end and include contact information.
- In the Assessment Domain, the first two questions ask for perceptions regarding teachers’ and school leaders’ abilities to detect offensive test items. Each of these questions needs to be constructed as two different questions as the participants may have one perception for teachers and a different perception for school leaders.
- In the Learning Environment Domain, question two says “print-rich”, but then refers to visuals other than print. Take the word “print-rich” out.
- In the Institutional Policies Domain, question two says, “At least one cultural responsiveness goal is included in the school’s improvement plan.” This is



misleading. Participants may not be clear as to whether it means a goal *about* culturally responsive teaching or a goal that *is* culturally responsive? This should be reworded.

- Two participants felt like there needed to be a domain specifically devoted to social studies due to the fact that our nation's history deals with sensitive issues that explore the impact of racial segregation and oppression. Two others shared an opposite opinion stating that the textbooks that are used in this day and age are very sensitive to issues such as civil rights. Each of these suggestions will be used for the refinement of the instrument for future use.

### Summary

Chapter IV reported the results of the data analyses. The SPSS statistical program was used in the treatment of the data. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations of responses for each statement on the C.A.R.E. were tabulated and displayed in tables. Also, t-tests and cross-tabulations were used in answering the research questions.

In Chapter V, a brief overview of the research project will be presented and the problem and purpose, significance, overview of literature, and methodology will be revisited. After this, explanations of the findings will be offered and an exploration of the results will be conducted by discussing the implications and recommendations for future practice and research.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the main points of this dissertation. The results are presented with conclusions regarding the perceptions of educators in Benwood I and Benwood II schools. Then, recommendations for practice and further studies are offered. I explore how the perceptions of educators in Benwood Phase I schools and Benwood Phase II schools were evaluated. This is followed by a discussion of the backgrounds of educators in both sets of schools, as well as their levels of professional development regarding culturally responsive teaching. The conclusions of my study could contribute to the body of knowledge related to culturally responsive teaching research. This research is an extension of Ladson-Billings' (1995) Culturally Relevant Learning Approach and Gay's (2000) Culturally Responsive Learning Theory.

According to Banks & Banks (2000), diversity in the United States is becoming progressively more reflected in the country's schools, therefore, the perceptions of teachers regarding culturally responsive institutionalized policies and practices is of vital significance. Poverty is becoming an increasingly important issue that affects quality of education. In 1999, approximately 36.6 million people in the United States were living in poverty, including one in five students (Banks & Banks, 2001). The inequity between the rich and the poor is also increasing (Banks & Banks, 2001). The top one percent of households owned 40 percent of the national wealth in 1997 (Banks & Banks, 2001).

Although the nation's students are becoming increasingly more diverse, the majority of the nation's teachers are White, middle-class, and female (Banks & Banks,

2001). Specifically, about 87 percent are White, and 72 percent are female (Banks & Banks, 2001). These demographic, social, and economic trends have important implications for education (Banks & Banks, 2001). It is crucial that teachers learn how to recognize, honor, and incorporate cultural referents meaningful to students into their teaching strategies (Gay, 2000). Perceptions will improve when teachers recognize that culture has a significant role in the learning process (Gay, 2000). Although some researchers have begun analyzing the ways in which culture affects learning, there has been little progress towards solving the problem that was the motivation for this dissertation: to see if increased self-assessment among school teachers and leaders could be used to improve perceptions of culturally responsive policies and practices in high-needs schools.

Policy production was evaluated by a variety of means, such as cultural artifact analysis of student, teacher, and parent handbooks and school improvement plans. Furthermore, policies resulting from the self-assessment used in this study were evaluated by using C. H. Lawshe's widely-used method of SME (subject matter experts) panels. Throughout the phases of this study, SMEs determined the essential necessary aspects of the policies and practices.

This dissertation sought to describe the development, validation, and utilization of an instrument designed to assess the cultural responsiveness of schools with culturally diverse groups and contrasting student and teacher populations. The distribution of the instrument was conducted in two sets of schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee (Benwood Phase I schools and Benwood Phase II schools). In 1990, eight of the lowest performing schools in Tennessee were in Chattanooga, Tennessee. These schools became known as

the Benwood schools because they were awarded a five million dollar grant from the Benwood Foundation and the Public Education Foundation of Chattanooga based on the fact that they had the lowest standardized test scores in the district. Each of these schools has a high population of students from backgrounds of poverty. The intent of the extra support from the Benwood Foundation for these schools was to take them from “non-proficient” to “proficient”. After the established success of the original Benwood schools, eight more schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee were awarded an additional \$7 million grant in July of 2007. These schools became known as the Benwood Phase II schools, and the first eight schools were then referred to as Benwood Phase I schools. Phase II schools were specifically chosen due to the fact that they had a high percentage of students performing at the “proficient” level. The purpose of the extra support from Benwood for these schools was to take them from “proficient” to “advanced”.

A comparative analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) was conducted to explore the perceptions of teachers in each set of schools. As such, the instrument entitled the C.A.R.E (Culturally Aware and Responsive Education) tool was distributed to all certified educators in each of the sixteen schools and the mean scores for the two sets of schools were compared to determine which set of schools perceived their schools as being more culturally responsive.

This dissertation explored the ways in which culturally diverse public schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee, could be impacted by the use of an assessment tool created to determine a school’s level of cultural responsiveness. This research sought to identify and explore any significant differences in perceptions among educators in the two sets of schools. A draft of the C.A.R.E. was used to determine what the components of culturally

responsive practice should include. Using feedback from teachers, school administrators, and policy makers, changes and additions were made to the tool as determined necessary throughout the initial phases of the study.

### Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

With the increasingly diverse nature of public schools, it is imperative that schools adopt culturally responsive policies and practices. Formative assessment specifically aimed at self-assessment of cultural awareness and sensitivity is a critical enhancement of a culturally responsive educational program. Many urban schools in Chattanooga have a majority population of African American and Hispanic students from backgrounds of poverty. These same schools employ a majority of White teachers and policy makers from middle-class backgrounds. Classrooms in Chattanooga today are not the same as they were a decade or even a few years ago. Major demographic shifts in Chattanooga have led to increasing numbers of culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse students in our schools. In addition, the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and the resulting mandates requiring schools to report disaggregated data have forced a spotlight on the achievement gaps that have been prevalent for years among minority students and their majority counterparts. The primary purpose of this inquiry was to determine what educators and policy makers perceived to be the critical aspects of culturally responsive teaching and to use that information to make the C.A.R.E. more valid and reliable. An additional purpose was to determine if a cultural responsiveness assessment tool would aid educators in becoming more culturally aware and responsive. Moreover, analyzing two contrasting populations of teachers to determine perceptions of culturally responsive teaching provided critical information to

offer to Hamilton County Department of Education, the Benwood Foundation, and the Public Education Foundation.

Recent reports and research seem to indicate that some progress has been made in closing the gaps, but there are still significant inequities that continue to exist for a wide range of educational indicators, including grades, scores on standardized tests, dropout rates, and participation in higher education (Viadero & Johnston, 2000). Some research indicates that these disparities in achievement stem in part from a lack of fit between traditional school practices—which are derived almost exclusively from European American culture—and the home cultures of diverse students and their families (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995). According to Hollins (1996), children with a European-American heritage have an automatic educational advantage, while children from other backgrounds are required "to learn through cultural practices and perceptions other than their own" (p. x). A cultural mismatch is often the result of these divergent perspectives regarding fundamental concepts like human nature, time, the natural environment, and social relationships (Sowers, 2004).

#### Overview of the Literature

The literature review focused on the seven domains represented in the C.A.R.E. (culturally responsive institutional policies, culturally responsive institutional practices, culturally responsive learning environments, culturally responsive literacy instruction, culturally responsive social development, culturally responsive assessment, and culturally responsive community engagement). The literature was used to determine the essential components of each domain.

A large proportion of the literature described culturally responsive instruction as a type of differentiated teaching that modifies the classroom environment as needed in order to make learning most meaningful for students. In a culturally responsive classroom, literature reflects the ethnic perspectives represented in the class. Math instruction incorporates everyday-life concepts, such as the economics, employment, and consumer habits of the ethnic groups represented.

Finally, the literature suggests that in order to teach to the different learning styles of students, learning opportunities should reflect a variety of sensory opportunities-visual, auditory, tactile (Gay, 2000). Ladson-Billings (1995) explains that culturally responsive teachers develop intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by "using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 382). In a sense, culturally responsive teachers teach the whole child (Gay, 2000).

Hollins (1996) adds that education designed specifically for students of color incorporates "culturally mediated cognition, culturally appropriate social situations for learning, and culturally valued knowledge in curriculum content" (p. 13). Culturally responsive teachers realize not only the importance of academic achievement, but also the maintaining of cultural identity and heritage (Gay, 2000). Ladson-Billings (1995) studied real-life instruction in actual elementary classrooms, and she concluded that it was common for these values to be demonstrated. She recognized that when students were part of a collective effort designed to encourage academic and cultural excellence, expectations were clearly expressed, skills were explicitly taught, and positive interpersonal relations were regularly exhibited. Students viewed the teacher and each other like members of an extended family (assisting, supporting, and encouraging each

other). Students were held accountable as part of a larger group, and it was the task of the entire learning community to make certain that each individual member of the group was successful. By promoting this academic community of learners, teachers responded to the students' need for a sense of belonging, honored their human dignity, and promoted their individual self-concepts (Gay, 2000).

Ladson-Billings' research (1995) indicates that culturally responsive teaching empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Ladson-Billings' research revealed nine determined principles that are common in a culturally responsive setting.

- *Communication of High Expectations* - There are consistent messages, from both the teacher and the whole school that students will succeed, based upon genuine respect for students and belief in student capability.
- *Active Teaching Methods* - Instruction is designed to promote student engagement by requiring that students play an active role in crafting curriculum and developing learning activities.
- *Teacher as Facilitator* - Within an active teaching environment, the teacher's role is that of guide, mediator, and knowledgeable consultant, as well as instructor.
- *Positive Perspectives on Parents and Families of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*- There is an ongoing participation in dialogue with students, parents, and community members on issues important to them, along with the inclusion of these individuals and issues in classroom curriculum and activities.
- *Cultural Sensitivity* - To maximize learning opportunities, teachers gain knowledge of the cultures represented in their classrooms and translate this knowledge into



instructional practice (retrieved from [www.knowledgeloom.com](http://www.knowledgeloom.com), December 21, 2008).

In summary, the literature review revealed some common denominators that are present in all culturally responsive learning environments. In reviewing the C.A.R.E. instrument, all of the common characteristics explored in the literature review were present in the survey. The domains address all of the major components of a culturally responsive school.

### Methodology

This research study was descriptive and explorative in nature utilizing a quantitative survey instrument consisting of 33 indicators categorized into seven broad domains. Initially, 564 surveys were distributed to educators in Benwood schools. A sample of 175 educators from Benwood I schools and 141 educators from Benwood II schools added up to a total of 316 educators who completed and returned the C.A.R.E. survey, which represented a response rate of 57%. A total of sixteen participants volunteered to share feedback regarding the survey. Statistical analysis was conducted with the use of t-tests for Research Questions 1 and 3 and a chi-square test for Research Question 2.

### Results and Discussion

#### *Research Question 1*

Research Question 1 asked: Do the perceptions regarding culturally responsive education differ between educators in Benwood Phase I schools and Benwood Phase II schools?

An independent- samples  $t$  test was conducted to evaluate the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of levels of cultural responsiveness between educators in Benwood Phase I and educators in Benwood Phase II schools.

The independent samples  $t$  test summarized in the tables in Chapter 4 illustrates that the difference in perceptions were significant,  $t(268) = 3.60$ ,  $p = 0.00$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I schools ( $M = 123.8$ ,  $SD = 18.78$ ) overwhelmingly perceived higher levels of culturally responsive policies and practices in their schools than did educators in Benwood Phase II schools ( $M = 115.4$ ,  $SD = 19.18$ ). The results indicated that of the 33 indicators constituting the C.A.R.E., Benwood I educators perceived higher levels of cultural responsiveness described in 28 of the 33 indicators. Thus, there is a significant difference in the level of perceived cultural responsiveness in the Benwood schools. The most significant differences related to Domain I (Culturally Responsive Institutional Policies) and Domain IV (Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction).

In Chapter 4, a break-down of the results for each of the indicators listed on the C.A.R.E. instrument was provided. Having identified each indicator and explored whether or not it was significantly different among the perceptions in each school, an explanation for the findings will now be offered.

In Domain I, *Culturally Responsive Institutional Policies*, there was a significant difference in perceptions among participants in the two sets of schools on all four items within the domain. Benwood Phase I schools had higher mean scores for all four indicators. The schools included in the Benwood I group have been in the midst of the Benwood reform efforts since 2003. As such, they have been heavily immersed in the adoption of certain institutionalized policies relevant to a culturally responsive

educational setting. Because the schools in Phase I are among the schools with the highest levels of poverty, there has been a concentrated focus on educational policy issues related to teaching students from backgrounds of poverty. This is not to say that the same issues have not been explored among Benwood Phase II schools, but when one takes into consideration factors such as change readiness levels of teachers and fidelity of change efforts, it is sensible to speculate that the Phase I schools have higher levels of commitment due to the simple fact that they are farther along in the Benwood reform effort. Very generally speaking, this can be said for every instance of higher mean scores by Benwood I participants. However, in some cases, a more specific analysis is deemed necessary.

For the second domain, *Culturally Responsive Institutional Practices*, educator perceptions among participants in Benwood I schools and Benwood II schools were significantly different in two areas. However, they were very similar with regard to three indicators. These three indicators were:

- Teachers regularly relate questions during classroom discussions to real life issues.
- Teachers coach students to become active participants in their own learning.
- Teachers employ practices that draw on students' prior knowledge and communication skills.

Perhaps the reason there was not a significant difference in perceptions between the two contrasting populations of educators is that these three indicators are identified as best practice in teaching, but are not necessarily specifically associated with best practice related to culturally responsive teaching. While they are certainly things that one would

like to see in a culturally responsive setting, they alone are not enough to associate with culturally responsive teaching. In effect, they are necessary, but not sufficient.

Within that same domain, *Culturally Responsive Institutionalized Practices*, there was a significant difference in perceptions between the two groups related to two indicators. The educators in Benwood Phase I schools indicated that they perceive these practices to be present more frequently in their schools. These indicators were:

- Teachers regularly and openly discuss culturally responsive education and curriculum change.
- The faculty and staff have a sense of responsibility for achieving a culturally responsive learning environment.

One may conclude that the reason there was a significant difference in perceptions between the two sets of schools is that educators in Benwood I schools have received more professional development and thus they are more reflective in their practices regarding cultural awareness and sensitivity. In specific regard to the first of the above bulleted items (Teachers regularly and openly discuss culturally responsive education and curriculum change) all Benwood I faculties have had extensive training related to *Professional Learning Communities*. One of the universally accepted characteristics of a true professional learning community is “reflective dialogue” (Dufour, 2004). In schools where reflective dialogue is an institutionalized practice, it is not surprising that the teachers are more frequently engaging in critical conversations related to tough topics such as needed curriculum change related to culturally responsive teaching. Along those same lines, it would make sense that the result of such critical conversations would be an increased sense of urgency and responsibility.

In the third domain, *Culturally Responsive Learning Environments*, there was not a significant difference in perceptions between the two groups of educators. Both populations of educators indicated that they perceived their schools to be doing a good job of providing a physical environment that was culturally responsive. Each of the indicators in this section of the survey dealt specifically with the physical environments (i.e., the posters on the walls, painted murals, books, displays, etc.) A possible reason why there was no significant difference between the two sets of schools is because our society has in recent years fostered an attitude of “political correctness” that encourages a multicultural illustration of our schools. While this paradigm shift in thinking inclusively is a much-needed step in the right direction, it is by no means a way of truly transforming curricula to make it more meaningful and responsive to students. However, the fact that both sets of schools have generally positive perceptions in this area is definitely a promising step in the right direction.

In the fourth domain, *Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction*, there was a significant difference in perceptions in five out of seven indicators. Benwood Phase I educators had significantly higher mean scores in five areas. These include:

- Contrastive analysis is effectively utilized to help students develop a conscious and rigorous awareness of the grammatical differences between home speech and school speech.
- Teachers choose literature where the narrator uses SE and the characters, in their dialogue, use AAVE, or vice versa.
- Students are consistently presented with opportunities to choose the language appropriate to the time, place, audience, and communicative purpose.

- Students are consistently presented with opportunities to analyze the rules underlying AAVE as well as those generating SE.
- The teacher utilizes dialect contrasts to facilitate conversations about the underlying structures of language.

There are a variety of possible reasons why educators in Benwood Phase I schools see the use of contrastive analysis more frequently in their schools. For one, this is an approach that is very progressive and relatively new to the educational world. The research involving contrastive analysis is just beginning to show up in college courses and teacher professional development. Since the teachers in Benwood I schools have been involved in the reform effort longer, it is logical that they have had more exposure to and experience with this technique. Another possible reason Benwood I participants reported more utilization of contrastive analysis is that there are more African American students in Benwood I schools. Although contrastive analysis is proving to be an effective technique for teaching students with a vernacular other than Standard English to improve grammar skills and usage, many people are more quick to identify AAVE (African American Vernacular English) as a non-standard and inferior form of grammar and thus educators working with higher percentages of students using AAVE are logically the teachers who will be first to adopt this practice.

Another indicator identified as having a significantly better perception among educators in Benwood I schools was “Teachers choose literature where the narrator uses SE and the characters, in their dialogue, use AAVE, or vice versa.” As previously stated, there are more African American students in Benwood Phase I schools than in Benwood Phase II schools. This may account for the difference in perception. However, in a

qualitative interview, one educator from a Benwood II school indicated that although she did not have many African American students, she consistently used this technique because so many of her poor, White students use Southern Vernacular, which shares many of the characteristics of AAVE. As a further testament of the significantly lower amount of professional development in Benwood II schools, this respondent also indicated that she was not even aware that this technique actually had a name. It just made sense to her to practice it.

With regard to the last two indicators that revealed perceptions of increased use in Benwood I schools (Students are consistently presented with opportunities to analyze the rules underlying AAVE as well as those generating SE and the teacher utilizes dialect contrasts to facilitate conversations about the underlying structures of language) it is once again possible that professional development and exposure to progressive teaching approaches are factors that make a critical difference.

Within that same domain, *Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction*, there were two indicators in which educators from Benwood Phase II schools had slightly higher mean scores than educators in Benwood Phase I schools. Though this difference was not significant, it is important to point out that the perceptions for these two indicators were similar among the educators in the two sets of schools. These indicators were:

- Teachers show respect and appreciation for the linguistic knowledge students bring to school.
- Students are consistently presented with opportunities to carefully analyze and discuss dialogue contrasts in literature.

It is very encouraging that educators in Benwood II schools perceive that they and their colleagues show respect and appreciation for the linguistic knowledge that their students bring to school. What this seems to indicate is that these educators respect that there is a difference, but that they have not developed a skill-set for addressing these differences. This is promising because the first crucial step in addressing this issue is acknowledging the diversity and respecting it. The other indicator for which they had similar perceptions to that of educators in Benwood I schools (Students are consistently presented with opportunities to carefully analyze and discuss dialogue contrasts in literature) also indicates that they are beginning to explore culturally responsive ways in which to address the linguistic differences of their students.

In the fifth domain, *Culturally Responsive Social Development*, there was a significant difference between the perceptions of participants in two of the four indicators. Two indicators showed no significant differences. The two indicators showing a significant difference were:

- Students regularly participate in conversations which allow them to explore their own cultural identities and the ways in which those identities affect relationships with teachers and peers.
- Group problem-solving activities centered on topics that are relevant to the cultures represented in the class are common.

Educators in Benwood I schools were probably more likely to report that they frequently observe students participating in conversations which allow them to explore their own cultural identities and the ways in which those identities affect relationships with teachers and peers because of the fact that there is more cultural diversity within



their schools and cultural congruence has become such an prominent factor in their rooms that it cannot be ignored. Also, the extensive training in the area of *Professional Learning Communities* has perhaps made teachers in these schools more open to de-privatizing their practices and the natural result is a more open and honest environment that promotes dialogue.

Perhaps the reason there are more perceived group-problem solving activities centered around culturally relevant topics in Benwood I schools is because teachers in these schools have been heavily saturated with professional development geared toward the notion of genuine learning being socially constructed. Also, due to the nature of the escalating social problems that the students in these schools bring with them, teachers have been forced to adopt practices that are more engaging, perhaps even entertaining, just to maintain the attention of their students. As one Benwood I teacher explained, “We have to put on a dog and pony show to keep the attention of our students. We have to incorporate their interests, such as the music they like, into our teaching. When I let them talk to each other about issues going on in their lives and the things that they care about, I am able to get much more work out of them” (anonymous conversation from a key informant interview on May 21, 2009).

In the sixth domain, *Culturally Responsive Assessment Practices*, there was a significant difference in perceptions among the two sets of educators with regard to two indicators. These two indicators are:

- Teachers and educational leaders are able to detect offensiveness in test items.

- Teachers and educational leaders are able to detect unfair penalties in test items.

The demographic data collected related to teacher race and sex indicates that there are more minorities teaching in Benwood Phase I schools. This may be one reason why there is a heightened sense of offensiveness and unfair penalties among educators in Benwood I schools. Also, like in so many other instances, increased professional development has played a critical role in bringing about awareness in the Benwood I schools.

In the seventh domain, *Culturally Responsive Community Engagement*, there was only one significant difference among the two sets of schools. This difference was related to perceptions pertaining to the following indicator:

- The school has a parent training component and regularly apprises parents of services offered.

The Benwood Foundation pays for Benwood schools (both Phase I and Phase II) to have Family Partnership Specialists in their schools. Such a person is typically one who would be responsible for planning and carrying out a parent training program. Although this incentive is offered to all Benwood schools, it may be that the reason why the Benwood I participants reported more positive ratings is that Benwood Phase II schools have not had as long to contemplate the decision of hiring such a person. Some of the Benwood II schools had what is called a Parent Volunteer Coordinator before they became a Benwood school. Parent Volunteer Coordinators are not required to have a college degree. However, the Benwood Foundation requires that Family Partnership Specialists have a Bachelor's Degree. Some principals may be hesitant to replace their current Parent Volunteer Coordinator. Thus, the Benwood Phase I schools may be getting

better results and/or more publicity of services due to the fact that their Family Partnership Specialists have more education/training.

#### *Similarities Between the Two Groups*

Five indicators seemed to reveal some consistent positive perceptions between the educators in both sets of schools. These five indicators suggest that Benwood II educators have similar levels of perceived cultural responsiveness in specific areas as compared to the educators in Benwood I schools. In total, there were five indicators that revealed similar mean scores for Benwood I and Benwood II survey participants. These included:

- Teachers regularly relate questions during classroom discussions to real life issues.
- Teachers coach students to become active participants in their own learning.
- Teachers employ practices that draw on students' prior knowledge and communication skills.
- Teachers show respect and appreciation for the linguistic knowledge students bring to school.
- Teachers seek to understand parents' hopes, concerns and suggestions.

Two areas seemed to reveal some consistent neutral to negative perceptions between the educators in both sets of schools. Overwhelmingly, both groups of educators scored their schools lowest on the domain dealing with culturally responsive assessment policies and practices. Furthermore, it was that domain that resulted in the most hand-written comments from educators who took the survey. Some of the following comments were written on the *Culturally Responsive Assessment* section of the survey:

- “What is an unfair penalty?” (Benwood I respondent)

- “I would like to learn how to detect offensiveness in test items” (Benwood II respondent)
- “We can’t control what goes on the TCAP test.” (Benwood I respondent)
- “We don’t make the standardized tests.” (Benwood II respondent)

Comments such as these indicate to me that teachers in both sets of schools have a desire to learn more about culturally responsive policies and practices. They want to learn how to detect offensiveness in test items. They desire to obtain the ability to identify unfair penalties in tests. In interviews, participants from both groups (Benwood I and Benwood II), expressed a desire to learn more about bias review panels and empirical studies for examining culturally responsive assessments.

Another similarity between the two groups dealt with culturally responsive literacy instruction. Specifically, teachers expressed a desire to learn more about culturally responsive ways of teaching grammar. Both populations of teachers (Benwood I and Benwood II) indicated that they need to learn more about code-switching techniques such as contrastive analysis.

### *Research Question 2*

Research Question 2 asked: Is there a larger proportion of teachers serving students from cultural backgrounds similar to their own in Benwood I schools or Benwood II schools? Responses to the items dealing with educators’ economic backgrounds (in the demographic data section of the survey) and their analysis satisfy Research Question 2.

A chi-square test was conducted to assess whether or not there are any significant differences in socioeconomic backgrounds of educators in Benwood Phase I schools and

educators in Benwood Phase II schools. The results of the test were not significant, ( $\chi^2 = 32.1, p = .537$ ). A majority of educators in both Benwood Phase I schools and Benwood Phase II schools indicated that their socioeconomic background could best be described as middle class (35 % of participants from Benwood I and 31% of participants from Benwood II). Overall, these results suggest that the majority of educators in Benwood Phase I schools and the educators in Benwood Phase II schools come from similar cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, there is not a significant difference in the educators' backgrounds as compared to the students that they serve. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Cross-tabulation was used to determine whether or not there was a significant difference between the socioeconomic backgrounds of educators from Benwood I and Benwood II schools. Through statistical analysis, it was determined that there was not a significant difference among the cultural backgrounds of educators from Benwood I schools and Benwood II schools. However, I determined that there *was* a significant difference between the teachers and their students (for both sets of schools). Data retrieved from the school profile reports on the Tennessee Department of Education website revealed that the majority of students from Benwood I and Benwood II schools are economically disadvantaged. Educator responses from the C.A.R.E. revealed that the majority of teachers in Benwood I and Benwood II schools are from middle class backgrounds. This was interesting and, actually quite surprising, because some of the literature suggests that teachers are more empathetic and effective when teaching students from backgrounds similar to their own (Kunjufu, 2002).

Since some literature seems to indicate a strong connection between empathy and culturally responsive teaching practices (Kunjufu, 2002), an assumption was made that the schools with higher levels of perceived cultural responsiveness (Benwood I) would have more teachers serving students from cultural backgrounds similar to the teachers'. However, the results to the question "*Which of the following best describes your socioeconomic background?*" indicate that this should be examined more closely. Survey participants were given the following choices: poverty, middle class, upper middle class, and wealthy. A total of 319 participants answered this question (55% from Benwood I and 45% from Benwood II). Overwhelmingly, the majority of participants indicated that they grew up in a middle class background. In Benwood I schools, 35% participants indicated that they grew up in a middle class home, and in Benwood II schools, 31% participants indicated that they grew up in a middle class home. The remaining educators responded to the question in this way:

- In Benwood I, 9% of the participants indicated that they grew up in a background of poverty, and in Benwood II 6% of the participants indicated that they grew up in a background of poverty.
- In Benwood I, 9% of the participants indicated that they grew up in an upper middle class home, and in Benwood II 8% of the participants indicated that they grew up in an upper middle class home.
- In Benwood I, 1 participant indicated that she grew up in wealth, and in Benwood II there were no participants that perceived their status as that of wealthy.

So what does this mean? This is an important finding to note because it suggests that teachers *can* be taught the necessary skills to ensure that they are facilitating cultural

congruence within their classrooms and schools. This is not to say that just because teachers *perceive* that they have instituted culturally responsive policies and practices that they in fact are skilled, culturally responsive teachers. However, the fact that these teachers had a heightened sense of awareness related to culturally responsive teaching (based on survey results and qualitative interviews) suggests that they are more culturally responsive. Because of the many variables involved it is impossible to determine whether or not they had these skills before, or if they had been hired to teach in these schools based on the fact that they were more culturally aware and responsive. However, this finding has the potential to impact teacher preparation practices so further research is strongly recommended. If teachers can be taught how to be more culturally responsive, we should focus our attention on effective strategies for teaching future educators.

### *Research Question 3*

Research Question 3 asked: Between Benwood I schools and Benwood II schools which group of educators has had more professional development regarding culturally responsive teaching? The null hypothesis stated that there would not be a significant difference in the amount of professional development. This was important to determine because based on the rejected null hypothesis from Research Question 1, educators in Benwood I schools obviously perceive their schools to be more culturally responsive in both policies and practices. If their perceptions are significantly higher and it is revealed that their amount of professional development is also higher, it would be sensible to conclude that there is a correlation between the two. Thus, the results of Research Question 3 could very well determine the direction of future research related to this topic. To answer this question, a series of items were developed for the demographic data

portion of the survey instrument. The first five demographic questions from the demographic data sheet were used to determine levels of relevant professional development. These questions were:

- Have you read Ruby Payne's *Framework for Understanding Poverty*?
- Have you participated in any professional development designed around Ruby Payne's research?
- Have you read Martin Haberman's *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty* book?
- Have you participated in any professional development designed around Martin Haberman's research?
- Were you an Osborne Fellow?

An independent samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate the null hypothesis that there would be no significant differences in professional development. The independent samples *t* test indicated that the difference in professional development regarding culturally responsive teaching practices was significant,  $t(233) = 6.37, p = 0.00$ . Educators in Benwood Phase I Schools ( $M = .25, SD = .43$ ) on the average, have experienced higher levels of professional development related to culturally responsive teaching than educators in Benwood Phase II Schools ( $M = .03, SD = .16$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected.

It may be that the reason for the higher levels of professional development among educators in Benwood Phase I schools is due to the fact that these schools have been in the midst of the reform effort for a longer period of time. A major element of the Benwood Initiative has been the recruitment, training and retention of excellent teachers. The Public Education Foundation of Chattanooga documented a wide disparity in the



experience levels of urban and suburban teachers, mirroring a national shortage of qualified, experienced teachers in economically distressed communities. In addition to providing a variety of teacher training for all Benwood teachers, PEF, HCDE, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) and the Weldon F. Osborne Foundation implemented the Osborne Fellows Initiative, which provided a unique opportunity for selected Benwood teachers to obtain a master's degree in urban education. Local government also contributed to teacher recruitment and retention through individual and school-wide performance bonuses, housing incentives and free master's degree tuition (retrieved from [www.pef.chattanooga.org](http://www.pef.chattanooga.org) on June 21, 2009). These incentives were specifically offered to Phase I teachers only (due to funding issues). All of these things combined have had a tremendous impact on the quality of teachers in Benwood I schools. However, it makes sense to assume that once Benwood Phase II have been involved in the reform as long as Phase I schools, the teachers in those schools will report similar levels of professional development.

#### *Teacher Preparation and Professional Development*

Despite the steadily increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations in schools, not all TEPs (teacher education programs) proactively address multicultural education or culturally responsive teacher education pedagogy (Gay, 2002). Many of the participants of this research suggested that there is a dire need for TEPs to offer many and varied cross-cultural experiences. Teachers need to know how to adapt the content of instruction and teaching styles. Curriculum, methodology, and instructional materials should be responsive to students' values and cultural norms. Thus, the ultimate challenge for teacher educators is to prepare reflective practitioners

who can connect, commit, and practice a culture of care with diverse groups of students and their families.

This research suggests that teacher preparation and professional development play an important role in culturally responsive teaching. A logical recommendation is to further examine the need for rethinking current approaches to teacher education pedagogy. Another recommendation is to develop specific guidelines for developing culturally responsive teacher education pedagogy as well as guidelines for culturally responsive professional development for practicing teachers. Educators and policy makers who participated in this research indicated that they see a need for teachers who can use quality research-based pedagogy; that is pedagogy responsive to the learning, emotional, and social needs of ethnically and linguistically diverse students. Three of the most significant differences in educator perceptions were related to awareness of and sensitivity to linguistic diversity among students (specifically, those indicators dealing with AAVE). The United States is becoming more ethnically and linguistically diverse and the average American classroom is now comprised of students from various cultural backgrounds. As a result, educators are faced with the challenge of determining the ways to make learning most meaningful for these diverse groups.

A possible area for future research is to carefully conduct a study of teachers' attitudes toward African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Young people generally adopt the grammar represented in the type of music that they listen to, and the rise of rap music has influenced children of many ethnic groups. Rap music, which is often a means of expression for exploration of social issues through AAVE, has gained mass exposure and popularity and thus many children of ethnic groups other than African American may

use AAVE. Therefore, it is suggested that a valuable area for future research may be to determine the impact of linguistic education, such as a focus on sociolinguistics, on TEPs and teacher professional development programs. Obviously, information alone will not be enough to address the potential problems caused by linguistic bias in education so it is also suggested that a thorough analysis of educator attitudes be conducted. Baugh (1998) has written about universities' failures to support teacher education as fully as other professions. If teachers perceive AAVE as a speaking deficit, Meier (1998) argues that teachers "are often likely to overlook or discount language strengths and create instructional settings that do not engage students linguistically or cognitively" and that "teachers need to learn about African American literary traditions in order to help their students build literacy and oracy" (p. 85).

This study addressed seven different aspects of culturally responsive teaching, and of the seven areas that both Benwood I educators and Benwood II educators perceived themselves to be performing at a lower level dealt with cultural awareness and sensitivity dealing with linguistic diversity (specifically, AAVE). AAVE was the English dialect explored in the literacy domain of the C.A.R.E. instrument because many educators in the Benwood schools will encounter AAVE-speaking students in their classrooms.

### *Culturally Responsive Assessments*

The domain in the C.A.R.E. that revealed the lowest ratings for both sets of schools, Benwood Phase I and Benwood Phase II, was the Culturally Responsive Assessment Domain. This research determined that teachers in both sets of schools could benefit from having more professional development specifically geared toward assisting

them in developing the skills to detect offensiveness and unfair penalties in test items. One recommendation may be to educate teachers on the processes of empirical analysis and judgmental and bias review panels for the purpose of detecting bias and unfair penalty items in assessments. These groups of educators may also collaborate on the development of culturally relevant and responsive performance tasks.

A basic premise underlying educational interventions within a culturally responsive model is that referents meaningful to students are intentionally provided within the curriculum. As such, curriculum-embedded assessments can be developed to support learning, and these assessments must be grounded within the same contextual and content frameworks as instructional activities. The mixed-item type assessments associated with these types of assessments pose serious validity challenges, however. In an article entitled “Culturally Responsive Assessment: Development Strategies and Validity Issues”, author Audrey Qualls (1998) recognizes and addresses challenges related to culturally responsive assessment development, basing responses upon both evidential and consequential facets of validity such as construct under-representation, score generalizability, curricular relevance, value implications, and content/experience bias.

Qualls (1998) explains how, for years, there has been a practice of looking at African American children’s poor performances on traditional assessments. We educators must surely feel compelled to question our abilities. It is obvious that we have failed to meet the needs of a vast number of African American students using traditional educational practices and activities. For years, many of us have viewed these children's internal frameworks as being deficient and have attempted to restructure their ways of

thinking to fit a prescribed pattern. In this process, we have not only lost generations of potential leaders and scholars, but we have also disturbingly positioned ourselves to lose numerous more. According to Qualls, we clearly need to reconsider the strategies and tools that we use to facilitate learning for African American youth (Qualls, 1998).

Qualls (1998) argues that what is perhaps most obvious with regard to this discussion of culturally responsive assessment is the need for collaboration across all stages of development. Since my study indicates that culturally responsive assessment practices is the area where educators in both Benwood I and Benwood II schools perceive the practices in their schools to be most lacking, it seems obvious that more teacher professional development in this area be a recommendation. At the same time, it is important to recognize that the persons most knowledgeable in subject-matter content are not necessarily those who are most knowledgeable about relevant contextual cultural influences, nor are they necessarily the most proficient in identifying the developmentally- appropriate teaching strategies needed for designing the actual assessment procedures. Whereas the initial efforts in developing appropriate assessment tools must be collaborative, it is ultimately the classroom teacher who must learn how to model and refine these tools if they are to positively affect the quality of learning. For this reason, I also recommend that Hamilton County Department of Education and the Chattanooga Public Education Foundation collaborate to develop a plan of action for encouraging teachers to embrace increased awareness and sensitivity related to cultural responsive assessment.

### *Contrastive Analysis*

Both populations of educators indicated that their perceptions regarding culturally responsive literacy practices, particularly those related to teaching grammar and concepts related to Standard English, left some room for improvement. Among Benwood I educators, the average mean score for the indicator, “Students are consistently presented with opportunities to analyze the rules underlying AAVE as well as those generating SE” was 3.17. Among educators in Benwood II schools, this mean score was an even lower 2.64. To me, this suggests that educators need more exposure to techniques of teaching code switching, such as contrastive analysis.

Kelli Harris-Wright suggests that contrastive analysis is a culturally responsive way to teach language arts and literacy skills to students who employ dialects other than Standard English (SE). Contrastive analysis is designed to help students develop an awareness of the grammatical differences between home language and school language, but in a non-judgmental and sensitive manner. The approach requires a rigorous amount of analysis by students, and theorists suggest that students will naturally learn to code-switch between language varieties and choose the appropriate language for particular situations (Harris-Wright, 1997). Thus, a recommendation is that Hamilton County plan district-wide professional development to expose teachers to the practices of contrastive analysis and code-switching.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study may have the potential to inform educators and policy makers about the effects that educator self assessment of cultural responsiveness has on teachers’ self-awareness. It was determined that educators in Benwood I schools have

had more professional development and that they also perceive their schools to have a more culturally responsive approach to education. This may cause one to conclude that increased professional development geared around topics dealing with culturally responsive policies and practices may be associated with increased awareness and more positive perceptions related to culturally responsive teaching. This study showed a significant increase in the percentage of Benwood I teachers who have had exposure to books and professional development centered on Ruby Payne's *Framework for Understanding Poverty* and Martin Haberman's *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty*. This correlation suggests that such activities may increase teachers' senses of cultural awareness and aid in their positive perceptions of their schools. It is important to point out, however, that there are a number of untested reasons for this correlation. Further research is needed to explore the various variables that were not tested in this study.

The findings of this study have important implications for teacher-education programs and for teacher professional development plans. If teachers' perceptions and attitudes related to culturally responsive education are explored through courses that reveal the nature and origin of their perceptions and attitudes, then they may approach culturally responsive policies and practices in an honest way that will in turn be more sensitive to the needs of students.

The results of this research also have implications for policy decisions because policy and curriculum planning from a deficit view can adversely affect teachers, administrators, and students. Awareness of educators' perceptions can influence policies related to teacher preparation and professional development. Moreover, this research may assist policy makers from the Hamilton County Department of Education and the

Chattanooga Public Education Foundation in making decisions regarding funding and professional development.

### Conclusions

This research revealed some interesting insights regarding educators' perceptions of culturally responsive institutional policies and practices. Among these is the fact that educators in Benwood Phase I schools report evidence of cultural responsiveness in their schools at a significantly higher rate than educators in Benwood II schools. Also concluded from this research is the fact that educators in both sets of schools (Benwood I and Benwood II) come from similar cultural backgrounds (middle class) while both groups are responsible for educating students who are primarily economically disadvantaged. Both groups of educators indicate a desire and willingness to become more culturally congruent in their practices. Lastly, this research revealed that teachers in Benwood Phase I schools have had significantly more professional development related to culturally responsive teaching than have teachers in Benwood Phase II. However, there is reason to believe that the improvements in educator perception and success related to culturally responsive teaching practices will steadily grow in Benwood Phase II schools just as they have in Benwood Phase I schools.

### Recommendations for Practice

In light of the findings, the following are recommendations for practice:

1. Pre-service educators should be given opportunities to explore the domains represented in the C.A.R.E. in order to reveal the nature of their attitudes and perceptions and the variables that are associated with those perceptions and attitudes.



2. The C.A.R.E. should be used in university courses to develop a bidialectal curriculum that exposes pre-service teachers to the contrastive analysis technique and various ways to use a students' dialect in the facilitation of SE.
3. Hamilton County Department of Education and the Public Education Foundation should collaborate to increase funding to support the professional development of teachers in Benwood II schools so that they may become as culturally aware and sensitive as the teachers in Benwood I schools.
4. Hamilton County Department of Education should design and conduct professional development that is specifically geared toward assisting teachers in Benwood schools to develop and sharpen their skills to detect offensiveness and unfair penalties in test items.
5. Hamilton County Department of Education should design and conduct district-wide professional development to expose teachers to the practices of contrastive analysis and code-switching.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

This research centered on a small sample of educators from sixteen schools in one city. In order to foster greater generalizability of the C.A.R.E., the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Conduct the study again using a larger sample of educators who have been exposed to varying levels of culturally responsive practices.
2. Conduct a research to determine the reliability and validity of the C.A.R.E., as well as how other measures of cultural responsiveness may relate to the C.A.R.E.

3. Use the C.A.R.E. as a pre and post measure of professional development.
4. Conduct a study of teachers' attitudes toward African American Vernacular English (AAVE).
5. Research the cultural responsiveness of schools serving differing demographics. As this study showed, being high on one subscale (domain) does not mean teachers will perceive their school's policies and practices high on another subscale. So, further study is needed to explore the differences in the seven subscales (domains) of the C.A.R.E.
6. Conduct more in-depth qualitative research on the perceptions of educators to help identify factors that may not lend themselves to qualitative research.
7. With regard to the instrument itself, more emphasis should be placed on professional development by adding an eighth domain to the C.A.R.E. instrument dealing with culturally responsive professional-development.
8. Conduct a study to determine the impact of linguistic education, such as a focus on sociolinguistics, on TEPs and teacher professional-development programs.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A LETTERS

## Appendix A1

March 19, 2009

Dr. Jim Scales  
Superintendent  
Hamilton County Department of Education  
4302 Bonny Oaks Dr.  
Chattanooga, TN. 37416

Dear Dr. Scales,

I am a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. I am conducting a research study to explore the ways in which culturally diverse public schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee are impacted by the use of an assessment tool created to determine a school's level of cultural responsiveness. My research will seek to identify and explore any significant differences in perceptions among teachers in the two sets of schools (Benwood I and Benwood II schools). Attached is a copy of my Proposal for your perusal.

I would need your endorsement of the study in order to approach the principals of the sixteen Benwood schools to seek their cooperation in this endeavor. I intend to distribute copies of the survey to the certified faculty at each of these sixteen Benwood schools. The results of the research study may be published, but the specific names of schools will not be used.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please call me at 423-315-3876, or my dissertation chair, Dr. Hinsdale Bernard at 423-425-5460.

I will need your approval to present to the UTC Institutional Review Board (IRB) before clearance is granted to conduct the study. If you have any questions concerning the UTC IRB policies or procedures, please contact Dr. M. D. Roblyer, IRB Committee Chair, at (423) 425-5567 or email [instrb@utc.edu](mailto:instrb@utc.edu).

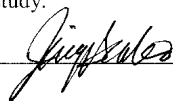
Thank you very much for your anticipated assistance and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Jennifer R. Spates  
6440 Middle Dr.  
Chatt., TN. 37416

I give permission for the faculty at the sixteen Benwood Schools to participate in this dissertation study.

Signature



## Appendix A2

Dear Educator,

I am a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. I am conducting a research study to explore the ways in which culturally diverse public schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee are impacted by the use of an assessment tool created to determine a school's level of cultural responsiveness. My research will seek to identify and explore any significant differences in perceptions among educators in the two sets of schools (Benwood I and Benwood II schools).

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw your participation at any time without any penalty. Your completed survey will represent your consent to participate in the study.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please call me at 423-315-3876, or my dissertation chair, Dr. Hinsdale Bernard at 423-425-5460.

This research has been approved by Dr. Jim Scales, Superintendent of Hamilton County Schools. It has also been approved by the UTC Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions concerning the UTC IRB policies or procedures, please contact Dr. M. D. Roblyer, IRB Committee Chair, at (423) 425-5567 or email [instrb@utc.edu](mailto:instrb@utc.edu). The results of the research study may be published, but the specific name of your school will not be used.

Thank you very much for sharing your opinions and perceptions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Spates

## Appendix A3

March 26, 2009

Dear Ms. (name of principal inserted with Microsoft Mail Merge),

I am a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. I am conducting a research study to explore the ways in which culturally diverse public schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee are impacted by the use of an assessment tool created to determine a school's level of cultural responsiveness. My research will seek to identify and explore any significant differences in perceptions among educators in the two sets of schools (Benwood I and Benwood II schools).

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please call me at 423-315-3876, or my dissertation chair, Dr. Hinsdale Bernard at 423-425-5460.

This research has been approved by Dr. Jim Scales, Superintendent of Hamilton County Schools. It has also been approved by the UTC Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions concerning the UTC IRB policies or procedures, please contact Dr. M. D. Roblyer, IRB Committee Chair, at (423) 425-5567 or email [instrb@utc.edu](mailto:instrb@utc.edu). The results of the research study may be published, but the specific name of your school will not be used.

Thank you very much for your anticipated assistance and cooperation in this study that will involve the educators at your school.

Sincerely,

Jennifer R. Spates  
6440 Middle Dr.  
Chatt., TN. 37416



APPENDIX B  
SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

**Appendix B1**  
**The C.A.R.E. Assessment Tool**  
**(Cultural Awareness & Responsive Education)**  
**Developed by Jennifer Spates**

**Definition of Terms**

**African American Vernacular English (AAVE)**- known colloquially as Ebonics, also called Black English, Black Vernacular or Black English Vernacular, is a dialect and ethnolect of American English. Similar in certain pronunciational respects to common southern U.S. English, the dialect is spoken by many African Americans in the United States. AAVE shares many characteristics with various Pidgin and Creole English dialects spoken by blacks worldwide.

**Bias-Review Panels**- refers to a panel of experts (teachers and educational leaders) who carefully examine assessments to identify bias test items.

**Code Switching**- refers to alternation between two or more languages, dialects, or language registers in the course of discourse between people who have more than one language in common. Sometimes the switch lasts only for a few sentences, or even for a single phrase.

**Contrastive Analysis**- refers to the systematic study of a pair of languages with a view to identifying their structural differences and similarities

**Culture**- refers to the shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, institutions, and experience of a group of people. The group may be identified by race, age, ethnicity, language, national origin, religion, or other social categories or groupings.

**Cultural Compatibility**- refers to similarities between the culture of the student and the teacher.

**Culturally Responsive**- refers to instruction that bridges the gap between the school and the world of the student, is consistent with the values of the students' own culture aimed at assuring academic learning, and encourages teachers to adapt their instruction to meet the learning needs of all students.

**Cultural Synchronization**- refers to the quality of fit between the teacher and students' culture. For African American students, this concept is related to Afrocentricity and Black life. This can cause a conflict between the child's learning style and that of a white school system that emphasizes Eurocentric values.

**Diversity-** the term used to describe the relative uniqueness of each individual in the population. It may also refer to a variation in society of culture and other factors, such as age, race, gender, physical abilities, sexual orientation, or religion.

**Empirical Analyses-** refers to an analysis that is derived from or relies on established observations, experiments, and research.

**Judgmental Reviews-** refers to a panel of individuals who carefully analyze assessments and seek to detect and eliminate biased items or tasks from those assessments.

**Offensiveness in Test Items-** refers to test content that offends, or upsets, angers, distresses, or otherwise creates negative emotions for students of particular subgroups.

**Responsiveness-** refers to the ability to acknowledge the unique needs of diverse students, take action to address those needs, and adapt approaches as student needs and demographics change over time

**Sociolinguistics-** refers to a branch of anthropological linguistics that studies how language and culture are related and how language is used in different social contexts.

**Standard English (SE)-** refers to a dialect of the English language, usually taken to mean that version of the English language most acceptable or most "correct," used by educated middle and upper classes and thus the dialect taught in public schools; standard English may vary by geographical location, but in general it is the dialect used in formal writing and in the broadcast and print media.

**Please read each statement carefully and circle the number that best describes your opinion regarding your school.**

1= Never   2=Rarely   3=Sometimes   4=Frequently   5=Always

**Culturally Responsive Institutional Policies:**

1. Cultural responsiveness is specifically discussed in the school's mission statement.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2. At least one cultural responsiveness goal is included in the school's improvement plan.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3. The school's commitment to and policies regarding culturally responsive education are stated in the school handbook.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5

4. The school includes at least one culturally responsive education goal as part of the criteria for determining budget allocations.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Culturally Responsive Institutional Practices:**

5. Teachers regularly and openly discuss culturally responsive education and curriculum change.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

6. The faculty and staff have a sense of responsibility for achieving a culturally responsive learning environment.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

7. Teachers regularly relate questions during classroom discussions to real life issues.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

8. Teachers coach students to become active participants in their own learning.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

9. Teachers employ practices that draw on students' prior knowledge and communication skills.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Culturally Responsive Learning Environments:**

10. The literature in the library and classrooms is representative of the various cultural groups present in the school.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

11. The school is a print-rich environment with posters and displays that are representative of the various cultural groups present in the school.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

12. Teachers consistently diversify the curriculum by providing materials and knowledge that are outside the mainstream culture.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

13. Teachers present lessons that represent real experiences of non-dominant groups.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction:**

14. Teachers show respect and appreciation for the linguistic knowledge students bring to school.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

15. Contrastive analysis is effectively utilized to help students develop a conscious and rigorous awareness of the grammatical differences between home speech and school speech.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

16. Teachers choose literature where the narrator uses SE and the characters, in their dialogue, use AAVE, or vice versa.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

17. Students are consistently presented with opportunities to carefully analyze and discuss dialogue contrasts in literature.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

18. Students are consistently presented with opportunities to choose the language appropriate to the time, place, audience, and communicative purpose.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

19. Students are consistently presented with opportunities to analyze the rules underlying AAVE as well as those generating SE.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

20. The teacher utilizes dialect contrasts to facilitate conversations about the underlying structures of language.

**Culturally Responsive Social Development:**

21. Students regularly participate in conversations which allow them to explore their own cultural identities and the ways in which those identities affect relationships with teachers and peers.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

22. When issues regarding culture arise in the classroom, teachers typically take advantage of the opportunity to explore cultural concepts.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

23. Group problem-solving activities centered around topics that are relevant to the cultures represented in the class are common.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

24. Instruction at this school is cooperative, collaborative, & community oriented.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Culturally Responsive Assessment:**

25. Teachers and educational leaders are able to detect offensiveness in test items.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

26. Teachers and educational leaders are able to detect unfair penalties in test items.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

27. Teachers develop and administer performance tasks that are grounded in the cultural context.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

28. Judgmental reviews are regularly conducted to detect and eliminate biased test items.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

29. Bias-review panels consist dominantly or exclusively of minority groups.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

30. Empirical analyses are regularly conducted to detect and eliminate biased test items.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Culturally Responsive Community Engagement**

31. Teachers seek to understand parents' hopes, concerns and suggestions.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

32. The school has a parent training component and regularly apprises parents of services offered.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

33. Teachers at this school are willing to gain the necessary cross-cultural skills for successful exchange and collaboration between home and school.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5.

## Appendix B2

### **Demographic Data Sheet**

Please check the correct answer for the following questions.

1. Have you read Ruby Payne's *Framework for Understanding Poverty*?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

2. Have you participated in any professional development designed around Ruby Payne's research?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

3. Have you read Martin Haberman's *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty* book?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

4. Have you participated in any professional development designed around Martin Haberman's research?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

5. Were you an Osborne Fellow?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

6. How many total years have you been an educator? \_\_\_\_\_

7. How many years in an urban setting?\_\_\_\_\_

8. How many years in a suburban setting?\_\_\_\_\_

9. How many years in a rural setting?\_\_\_\_\_

10. How many years in a private urban setting?\_\_\_\_\_

11. Which of the following best describes your upbringing?

Poverty\_\_\_\_\_

Middle-Class\_\_\_\_\_

Upper-Middle Class\_\_\_\_\_

Wealthy\_\_\_\_\_

12. Which of the following best describes your educational setting during your childhood?

Urban\_\_\_\_\_

Suburban\_\_\_\_\_

Rural\_\_\_\_\_

Private\_\_\_\_\_

13. Which of the following best describes your current economic status?

Poverty\_\_\_\_\_

Middle-Class\_\_\_\_\_

Upper-Middle Class\_\_\_\_\_

Wealthy\_\_\_\_\_

14. Which of the following best describes your age?

20-30\_\_\_\_\_

30-40\_\_\_\_\_

40-50\_\_\_\_\_

50-60\_\_\_\_\_

Over 60\_\_\_\_\_

15. What is your sex?\_\_\_\_\_

What is your race?\_\_\_\_\_

Optional: If you would like to participate in an interview to share your insights, perceptions, and opinions regarding culturally responsive teaching and this instrument, please provide your contact information:

DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME

Day Phone\_\_\_\_\_Evening Phone\_\_\_\_\_

Best time to receive calls:\_\_\_\_\_



## VITA

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### EDUCATION:

2009	Doctorate in Education, Learning and Leadership University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, Tennessee
2007	Post-Masters Endorsement, School Leadership University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, Tennessee
2006	Master of Arts, Urban Education University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, Tennessee
1996	Bachelor of Science, Early Childhood Education University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, Tennessee

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Present	Assistant Principal, Bess T. Shepherd Elementary Chattanooga, Tennessee
2006-2009	Assistant Principal, Harrison Elementary Chattanooga, Tennessee
2004-2006	Title I Lead Teacher, Hillcrest Elementary Chattanooga, Tennessee
1996-2004	Teacher, Normal Park Museum Magnet Chattanooga, Tennessee
1993-1996	Instructional Assistant, Calvin Donaldson Elementary Chattanooga, Tennessee

### PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION:

Member of Delta Kappa Gamma, Alpha Chapter  
Member of Tennessee Principal's Association  
Participant in a study conducted by the Chattanooga  
Public Education Foundation regarding Highly Effective Teachers

### PAPERS AND PROJECTS:

Published Article, Culturally Responsive Teaching- Preacher Style  
Multicultural Pavilion, March 2006 Edition